SPECIAL 16page Pullout

# VIETNAM VETERANS VISIT NICARAGUA

# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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# MEDAL OF HONOR RETURNED

Charles Liteky, in the first such ceremony ever, returned his Congressional Medal of Honor at the Capitol Building on July 29th. His unique act of protest was aimed at action of the U.S. government in giving aid to the Contras opposing the government of Nicaragua.

At the ceremony were a number of religious leaders who announced a nationwide campaign in opposition to Contra aid, calling it the "Campaign of Conscience." Over a million Americans are expected to join the campaign by *the time of elections in Novem*ber.

The following is the statement that Liteky made on the occasion:

"It is with great sadness that I renounce the Congressional Medal of Honor. I received the Medal of Honor in November of 1968 from President Lyndon Johnson in the East Wing of the White House.

Former Roman Catholic chaplain Charles Liteky, who won the Medal of Honor for heroism under fire in Vietnam, leaves his medal in an envelope at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

UPI photo

The award was given for saving lives under hostile fire in Vietnam.

"At the outset of this statement I want to say that my renunciation of the Medal of Honor in no way represents disrespect for the medal itself or for the recipients of medals of valor throughout history. My action is directed toward the inhumane foreign policy of my government, a policy that casts shadows of shame over the heritage of this country and places the U.S. outside the company of civilized nations, nations that respect international law and universally accepted norms of morality.

"I find it ironic that conscience calls me to renounce the Congressional Medal of Honor for the same basic reasons I received it, trying to save lives. This time the lives are not young Americans, at least not yet. The lives are those

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## 30th NATIONAL VVAW MEETING

Vietnam Veterans Against the War is holding our national meeting in Athens, Georgia, on the 11th and 12th of October. All members of the organization are invited to participate; interested individuals who are not members are invited to observe the meeting.

Suggestions for agenda items should be sent to the VVAW National Office. Among the topics of discussion will be chapter status reports, discussion of issues of particular interest to vets (Central America, proposed VA budget) and election of national officers.

For information about housing, directions, or other things pertaining to the meeting, contact Elton Manzione, 424 N. Chase St, Athens, GA 30601; (404)-543-1583 (day) or (404) 543-1454 (evening).

## Wisconsin Veteran Mortality Study

# SUICIDES, ACCIDENTS WAY UP

"Post traumatic stress is taking a toll on our veterans," according to Henry Anderson, the doctor in charge of Wisconsin's Vietnam veterans mortality study, "and for some the price is higher."

The two-year study adds weight to the growing body of evidence that the stress of service in Vietnam has contributed to continued health problems.

"There is a sharp pattern of unexpectedly high mortality rates from accidents and suicides among Vietnam veterans," said Anderson. The study also shows far higher rates of death from stress-related disorders than other veterans from the same era.

State Veterans Affairs Secretary John Maurer added, "The results of this study give us hard scientific evidence to support what Vietnam veterans have been telling us for years."

Although the study found clear patterns of higher death rates among Vietnam veterans, the findings on deaths from Agent Orange were elevated but found inconclusive by the study.

Vietnam veterans showed a 5% higher death rate from soft tissue sarcoma, a form of cancer directly linked to exposure to Agent Orange. However, the study found only nine deaths and though they were more than expected, they were termed "statistically insignificant." The study relies on the "higher powered national study" to show any effects of Agent Orange.

The study clearly showed that Vietnam vets died from:

-Suicides at a rate 14% higher than other veterans.

-Traffic accidents at a rate 15% higher than other vets.

-All accidents at a rate 11% higher than other veterans.

The study also showed higher than expected death rates from cirrhosis of the liver, and elevated levels of alcohol and tobacco abuse.

Anderson said some of that was likely due to "military practices which subsidize and promote alcohol and tobacco use." That probably related to continued use to "cope with the continuing stress they have experienced in their lives," he said.

The study took more than two years to complete and was jointly conducted by the State Division of Health and the Veterans Affairs Department.

--John Zutz
Milwaukee

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# FRAGGIN'

Sp 5 Willy(Ret.)
**A.K.A.**
**Bill Shunas**

I remember back in Basic Training where they used to have signs hanging on the walls of various training rooms. The signs had this mean looking Uncle Sam and said, "Freedom is not free." I remember, at the time, thinking that this statement must have some deep and profound meaning, although I couldn't figure out what. After two years in the Army I understood what being "not free" meant.

All you old vets out there ought to be happy to know that the country remains safe. The Defense Department remains vigilant in its continuing effort to make sure that people who work for it are not free. For example, take the polygraph training manual recently developed by the Defense Department Polygraph Institute at Fort McClellan, Alabama. The manual was supposed to train lie detector operators to screen out bad guys who wanted to work for the Army or the government.

The manual instructed them to ask some very personal questions of potential employees. Come to think of it, these were some difficult questions. I guess I couldn't pass myself.

"Have you ever assisted in the commission of an immoral act?" Well yes, I served in Vietnam.

"Have you ever owed a bar bill?" No, I always pay cash.

"Have you ever received sexual stimulation in a crowded area?" Yes. It was on the Moral Majority convention floor when they endorsed Ronnie's nomination for President.

"While under the influence of alcohol, have you done anything you are ashamed of?" I don't remember.

"Have you ever engaged in sex acts with an animal?" I once had a one-night stand with a lady of the right-wing persuasion. I think I met her at the Moral Majority Convention.

"Do you have any friends you would not be willing to recommend for a responsible position?" Most of them.

The questions in the manual go on and on about a person's sex life, family life and private affairs. They want to know about involvement in ethnic organizations like Polish-American clubs, the NAACP and Japanese Community clubs. Maybe they want to fight the "Big One" all over again.

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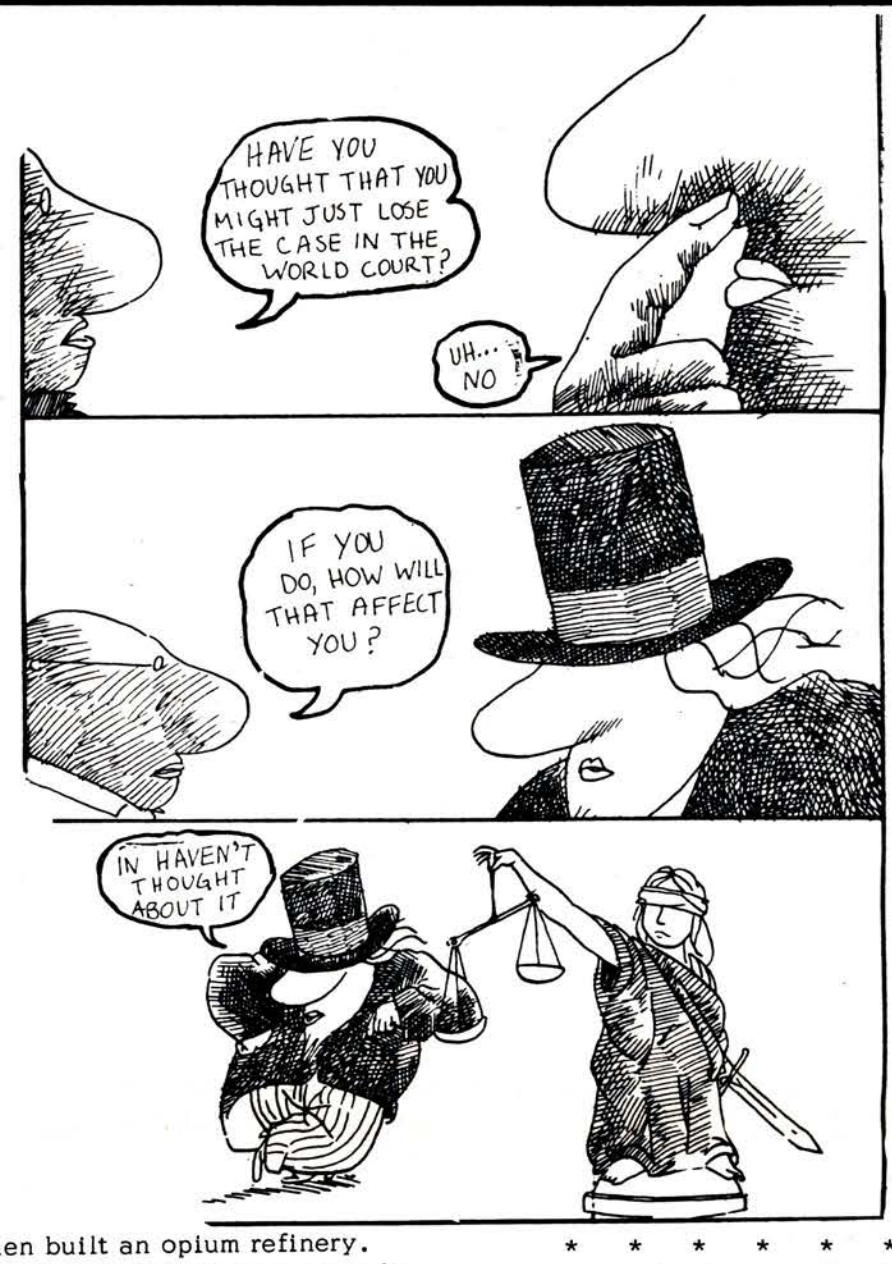
You know, in the public debate over U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, there is always argument over whether or not Nicaragua would be another Vietnam. I know that in one area it sure as hell would be the same.

Around the turn of the century, France ruled in Vietnam, but they were having a tough time making it pay. But they then built an opium refinery. There were few Vietnamese addicts, but after the refinery was built, Vietnamese addiction rose and became the source of one third of France's colonial administration's income. The French later encouraged Laotian tribes to grow poppies and used money from the drug trade to finance counter-insurgency efforts against the Viet Minh.




Later when the U.S. took over the war, they--in the person of the CIA and some of our South Vietnamese allies--also took over the drug traffic. The rest is history. Many of us picked up the habit and brought it home.

That was Vietnam. Now we find out that the Contras are helping to fund their rebellion by running cocaine. According to the report from U.S. officials and a CIA document, three Contra forces are involved--the FDN, the ARDE and M-3. The cocaine is flown from Columbia to Contra landing strips in Costa Rica where it is then put on boats and sent to Miami for distribution in the States.

Supposedly the Contras started drug-running to support their war effort back in 1984 when U.S. aid was cut off for the first time. Sound familiar? That's why the French started with drugs in Vietnam. Let's hope there will be no American GIs in Central America to fall victim to these drugs like we had in Vietnam!

* * * * * *

And look who's coming to the aid of these nice Contras. Why it's the queen mother of the Right, Phyllis Schlafly. She and some of her friends got together to send Christmas packages to these poor fellows. The care packages they sent included some useful items like toiletries. Also sent were breath mints.

I don't know what this was for. After tea time? You raid a village, kill off a few peasants and return for tea and mints? Sounds so civilized. That was real nice of the Mother Schlafly. And oh yes, each care package came inside its very own camouflage pouch. I wonder if it was designed by Gucci. But the pouch will come in handy. When all the mints are eaten, the Contras can use the pouch to carry their cocaine.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

On the lighter side, I see where the Australian army recently purchased 541,000 condoms. No, it's not for that. They claim that the condoms are excellent waterproofing for rifle barrels. I remember back in basic training they used to drill it into your head that what you called your weapon was a "rifle," not your "gun." I never understood why they were so intent on having us call it a rifle. When you pulled the trigger it didn't make any difference what you called the damn thing.

And do you remember what the word "gun" meant? That's what you used the condoms for back then. The DI's even used to recite a little ditty:

"This is my rifle,
This is my gun.
One is for killing
And one is for fun."

Now them upside down Aussies have got everything all messed up. Do you use the condom on the rifle or the gun? Which one is for fun? You could get killed if you use the condom on the wrong one.

* * * * *

Too bad Ronnie Reagan's father didn't use a condom. Did you hear his latest remark about the hungry? He seems to think that people go hungry in this country because they don't know what food is available. With all the government cutbacks on food stamps and nutrition programs, what are they supposed to do? Write to Phyllis Schlafly?

## 'GRENADE'

No matter what you think about Ronnie Reagan, he is good for one thing. The people he appoints to public office give me plenty of candidates for the Grenade of the Month. This time we'll throw two grenades for some quotes made by two of his appointees.

First there is Jefferson Sessions, who has been selected to sit on the U.S. District Court for southern Alabama. Among other great ideas, Mr. Sessions said about the Ku Klux Klan, "I thought those guys were OK until I learned they smoked pot." What should they have used? Contra cocaine?

And then there's Eileen Gardner, senior advisor to William Bennett, Secretary of Education. When testifying against federal aid to handicapped students she made the profound statement that, "Handicaps are there to help the individual grow towards inner spiritual perfection." Maybe that's true. It does seem as if there is a look of bliss on Ronnie Reagan's face every time someone asks him something that requires an intelligent answer.

Bill Shunas--
SP4 Willie

# WELCOME HOME PARADE
# HONOR THE WARRIOR~NOT THE WAR

Thousands upon thousands of Vietnam veterans participated in the "Honor Vietnam Veterans Parade" in Chicago. VVAW participated from the beginning meetings to start planning right through to the end.

The idea for the parade came from the "Welcome Home" parade held in New York City over a year ago. Chicago's mayor and city council, noted for disagreeing on almost everything, put on a rare show of unity in backing this event.

The politics of the parade leadership veered to the right in the early days. That was when General Westmoreland was invited to be the Grand Marshall of the parade, and a bevy of Medal of Honor winners were invited to head up the marchers.

Early on VVAW made the decision that it was important for our point of view to be part of the parade; the Chicago Chapter decided to march in the parade and to invite other Midwest chapters to join with us. VVAW cooperated with the parade committee while opposing the rightward trend of its politics all along the way. For us this required making a clear separation between the vets who served in Vietnam and the war that we fought in, targetting Westmoreland as the war criminal he was, and calling for no repeats of Vietnam in Central America. The central slogan for VVAW grew from this understanding: "Honor the Warrior, Not the War."

Vietnam vets came to the parade from all across the country, far more than almost anyone anticipated. According to a VVAW observer/counter, there were somewhat over 80,000 marchers; Chicago media all arrived at the figure of 200,000 marchers with another 300,000 spectators. By any count there were a lot of Vietnam vets marching in groups according to units of service, various organizations or associations--almost any grouping of vets. There were native American vets in traditional dress, a group of Black vets carrying a large African drum with anti-apartheid slogans, Vietnam vet motorcycle clubs, and VVAW with our banner.

The VVAW contingent had about 120 marchers, including vets of all nationalities, representing all services with both men and women. There were VVAW members from years back who decided that if they were going to march in this parade, VVAW was the group they wanted to march with even though they had not been active for many years. Included in the VVAW group was Charles Liteky, Medal of Honor winner and one of the organizers of a new, national Vets for Peace group.

As has become a tradition in VVAW marches, VVAW took old military cadences, kept the rhythms and sometimes the refrains, but replaced the cadences with political chants. We got a surprisingly warm welcome throughout the march route. Office workers joined in an anti-Reagan chant, and construction workers on a scaffold banged their hard hats in unison flashing the peace sign.

Other peace activists in Chicago took VVAW's suggestions and held banners long the parade route. They were surprised when not only did they have no problems, but were applauded by the marchers and included in photos that the marchers took.

Much of the impact of the march, both on the marchers and on public understanding came from the media. While VVAW is seldom in the situation having much control over media coverage, we did have a large impact. While there were a lot of TV shots of vets saluting Westmoreland (VVAW's "salute" was for Mayor Washington who stood next to Westmoreland on the reviewing stand), TV stations did in-depth interviews with several VVAW national officers, asked a number of questions about VVAW's statements about Westmoreland as war criminal, and consistently repeated the "warrior not the war" slogan. In the coverage following the march, each Chicago TV station felt they had to cover VVAW's participation in the march.

And, the "Honor the Warrior, Not the War" became pretty much the theme of TV coverage. Both in the coverage and in the parade itself, there was far less of the flag-waving, breast-beating, macho patriotic mindlessness than might have been expected.

This parade was by far the largest (so far--already rumors are afoot concerning one in Washington and another on the West coast). While there is no way to know why all these vets came to Chicago, or why all the Chicago vets decided to march, a couple of reasons stick out. Vets were clearly hoping to meet old friends, to get together with comrades they had not seen for many years. For so many Vietnam vets, someone we had fought beside suddenly disappeared (if he was wounded he was taken away and we never heard of him again, or was suddenly transferred to another job--there was no way for us to know). A "Vet-stock"--Woodstock with fatigues--provided a great chance to meet people with whom we had served. Again and again came the stories of vets meeting friends whom they thought had died and, sometimes, the stories of vets who found names on the replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial War of men they had not known were killed during the war. Reunions were frequent and joyful; disappointments were bitter and tearful.

For some the parade and surrounding events were a way to come to terms with their own feelings about the war and about friends who did not come back. Throughout the week the replica of The Wall--a portable half-size version--occupied a important position in Chicago, in the consciousness of veterans, and in the attention of Chicago's media. No activity which focuses on those 58,000 names of friends who did not return can push toward another war.

In building for the parade and in sweating to make VVAW's position an effective political force, two members of the Chicago Chapter Steering Committee--Virg McFadden and Dave Curry--did outstanding work. Their work paid off. At the same time, I enjoy the Milwaukee campout more.

--Barry Romo
VVAW National Office

Photo by D Stiger

## Vermont Parade

The 4th of July Vietnam veterans parade in Warren, VT (near Burlington) drew about 8000 people to this small town in the Green Mountains. The VVAW banner showed up a little late, and as the Vietnam vets marched first, the VT chapter was dispirited. However, the back copies of THE VETERAN went like hot cakes, as did the latest leaflet from MACV--Material Aid Committee, VT, a group organized by Viet vets in Nicaragua Libre to send material aid to the Sandinista Army. As the vets talked and watched the various floats and bands wind their way through the narrow streets of the village, talk turned to Central America, the Contra aid vote, and the feeling of deja vu. We were taken to task for not coming sooner with the VVAW and black and red MACV banners.

The Burlington Free Press, Vermont's paper of record, in yet another pat-the-vets-on-the-back editorial dated July 2nd expressed the snide hope that "the peace crowd...have enough sense to either stay away or yap silently" at the parade.

The "peace crowd" showed up: at least 50 people, clad in black, marching quite silently to the cadence beat on a single drum. They held white crosses, each bearing the name of one of the 15,000 Nicaraguans murdered by our sleazebag terrorists. With absolutely no discussion, we unfurled the VVAW banner and all of us fell in behind them. The effect on the onlookers was intense--either absolute silence or thunderous applause. Needless to say, there was no mention of this in any newspaper, radio, or TV broadcast.

--Chuck Winant
VVAW VT

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD VETS!

Vets interested in getting together a VVAW Chapter in the Pittsburg area should call or write:

Dave Hockabout
612 Gormley Ave
Carnegie, PA 15106
(412) 276-6454

# NOT EVERY VET CAME

If many thousands of Vietnam vets marched through the streets of Chicago, there were many more who did not march. For these vets, particularly those who live in Chicago, there was a real choice to make since they could not avoid the presence of the parade.

I took Chicago's "El" to get to the parade start point, and wore my Vietnam fatigue shirt with medals and VVAW patch. As I waited for the train to come, a man came up to me, asked if he had seen me the night before on TV (talking about people's feelings toward the parade), and went on to tell me why he wasn't marching.

An Ecuadorian national, he served in Vietnam, he told me, because he felt he owed something to the country (he had since become a citizen). He had used the GI Bill, gotten a reasonably good job, kept out of trouble, bought a house--all the things that go along with the immigrant-makes-good story. Now his son was 15; he would not be going to any war, not if his father could help it. He had not joined VVAW, he said, but he'd marched with us a couple of times in the early '70's. And he just simply could not see following Westmoreland again--not anywhere.

But, each day at lunchtime, he was skipping lunch and going over to the Wall for half an hour or so. He'd already found one name he did not expect; he was still looking for more.

I have no way of knowing how many vets this man reflects. Many, many people in fatigues were sitting along the side of the parade route instead of in the parade. And many of us who marched did so with the hope that the message we had would be heard louder than the hoopla of the parade and glitzy trappings of the day.

Despite the emotions of the day, I can only say that once was more than enough.

--Pete Zastrow
VVAW National Office

Photo by D Stiger

# Letter To the Mayor on WESTMORELAND

Dear Mayor Washington:

It has been my great honor to have been elected by the membership and serve as Secretary of the Mayor's Advisory Commission on the Chicago Vietnam Veterans "Welcome Home" Parade, and I assume it is that office that has brought me an invitation to attend your reception in "honor" of General William Westmoreland, Grand Marshal of the Parade. Please accept my respectful entreaty to be excused from attendance.

As a young counter-intelligence officer in training in 1970, I learned of the original underestimates of National Liberation Front support and strength in Vietnam as "classified" information in a U.S. Army Intelligence School class. General Westmoreland's alleged ignorance of the same information was his contention in his unsuccessful suit against the TV show "60 Minutes." His legal action in that instance and his more recent accusation that a Pulitzer Prize-winning photo (the famous photo of the young Vietnamese running naked away from burning napalm) is a fake indicate the general's contined insenstivity to the pain and costs of the Vietnam War for the citizens of this country and the people of Southeast Adia. My own published research has repeatedly shown the inequity of service and of sacrifice for the poor and minorities of the U.S.

While I continue to honor you and your dedication to "honoring the warrior but not the war," I cannot desecrate my veneration for those who gave their lives and those who served to "honor" in any way this man selected by an unrepresentative segment of the Chicago Vietnam veteran populationto be grand marshal of the Parade.

Respectfully,
Dave Curry, PhD
Former Captain
U.S.Army Vietnam

# New Words to an Old Tune CADENCES

I consider myself lucky to have been one of the 200,000 people who marched in the June 13th, 1986, "Welcome Home Vietnam Vets Parade" in Chicago.

VVAW marched, 120 strong, under the banner "Honor the Warrior, Not the War"; "VVAW: Serving Veterans, Peace and Justice since 1967." We were not the only group to use cadences, but ours were the best. Besides the usual ones (often reprinted in THE VETERAN) about no cuts at the VA, No more Vietnams, and Ronald Reagan is no good, we had created a special cadence for Harold Washington, Mayor of Chicago, at the reviewing stand. It went:

Harold Washington's the man,
Set Chicago on its can.
Since we're here we'd like
to say,
Thanks for giving us this day.
Sound off, 1, 2.....

At the reviewing stand there was the Mayor and Westmoreland standing together; well, I called the cadence and looked him and Westmoreland right in the eye. Old Harold puffed up his chest and looked so proud. Old Westmoreland looked like an old lifer. The crowd cheered so loud that Old Westy never got to hear the cadence written for him:

Westmoreland he was so lame,
Treated intelligence like a
game,
During Tet of '68
Thousands died for his mistake,
Sound off, 1, 2....

Well, it didn't matter--he caught heat all weekend.

The overwhelming attitude was not pro-war but, "Let's not repeat it!" It was a once-in-a-lifetime happening and I'm glad VVAW was alive and well to be there. But, our work's not over yet.

John Lindquist
VVAW Chant leader

SUPPLEMENT

# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

25¢

### We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War- And Neither Will Our Children!

# VVAW DELEGATION VISITS NICARAGUA

In the third week of April, 1986, a VVAW delegation, 14 strong, representing the east and west coasts, and the mid-west, toured Nicaragua on a fact-finding mission.

An intense, 6-day schedule took the VVAW members from the Une La Segovia region to the streets of Managua, Finostega, Matagalpa and Esteli. Meeting with officials at all points of the trip including Javier Carrión--charged with the defense of all of Nicaragua--and Omar Cabezas, famed guerilla leader and second in command to Thomas Borge in the Ministry of Interior.

The official meetings were tempered by the hundreds of unofficial encounters everyone had with the people of Nicaragua whose openness and friendly attitudes to the "Norte Americanos" showed the delegation the depth of support for the Revolution.

As a tightly knit group of friends and highly organized delegation the experiences of the individual VVAW members were immediately shared collectively by the group in nightly meetings. What follows here are some of those impressions of Nicaragua which those of us in the delegation which made the trip want to share with you, the readers of THE VETERAN.

## VETERAN ACTION AT U.S. EMBASSY

The phrase, "demonstrations at the U.S. Embassy" brings up a lot of news images from rock-*throwing crowds to groups of* armed people storming and looting the buildings. The pictures of the *U.S. Embassy in Saigon*, both during the Tet offensive of 1968 and during the 1975 evacuation of Saigon are forever burned into our consciousness.

With the Reagan Administration's screechings about Nicaragua, most people would automatically assume that duty at the U.S. Embassy in Managua must be among the most dangerous assignements in the world. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The U.S. Embassy sits on a busy but quiet (by our standards) boulevard, lined with large trees. No helmeted marines in flack vests, no concertina wire strung in a crescent at the entrance. There are no Americans in evidence at all on a normal day. Inside the gate a few Nicaraguans, employed by the U.S. to search vehicles for explosives wait for cars. Outside the gate armed people are finally in evidence--a few Nicaraguan police assigned to security for the Embassy, facing outward. As people pass by in vehicles or on foot they may glance at the Embassy, but that is about it. Truly, this is a strange attitude for a people locked in a war of terror run in part by the guys in aviator sunglasses and Rolex watches behind those walls.

Once a week, however, this scene changes. A demonstration--yes (gasp!) a demonstration occurs every Tuesday morning at 7 AM like clockwork. No, it's not a

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## VVAW Statement

We are members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. We bring you greetings and join you in protesting the dangerous Reagan Administration policy in Central America and in other parts of the world.

As Vietnam Veterans we have seen the effects of this kind of policy at another time, in another place--Vietnam.

We are here because the pattern is familiar. The rhetoric and actions of our government in escalating the war in Nicaragua is all too familiar. We don't want our sons and daughters fighting and dying in another Vietnam War here or anywhere.

Since we've been here we have seen many sons and daughters of Nicaragua who have been made casualties of a war that would not exist without the active participation of our government. We have come to love and respect the Nicaraguan people in the short time we have been here. While we struggle for decent benefits for all veterans, our government sees fit to spend millions for another war when it hasn't finished paying for the last unjust and immoral war in Vietnam.

Fifteen years ago this week VVAW marched in Washington, DC for a limited incursion called Dewey Canyon III in which we called for an end to the war in Southeast Asia and called for the return of our brothers from Vietnam. We threw our medals on the steps of our Capitol. This week in cities across the U.S. VVAW will be marching in commemoration of that event.

VVAW, as a result of our visit to Nicaragua has rededicated itself to continue the struggle to end the war in Central America.

NICARAGUA LIBRE!

## RELIGION AND FREEDOM

There were many reasons why I wanted to go to Nicaragua; one of them was the question of religion. We often hear in the case of countries going through political turmoil--or, in Central America when there is a revolution--that the church is affected and religious people can no longer enjoy the kind of religious freedom guarenteed in the U.S. by our Constitution. Countries in Latin America tend to be very religious, and the religion is Roman Catholic, a heritage from Spain. Since the Sandinistas came to power in Nicaragua in 1979, U.S. news media and politicians have focused on the Church and said that Nicaragua is a Communist country where there is no relgious freedom, where religious people are persecuted both because of their religion and because they want the country to return to democracy.

I served in the Navy from 1978-82. During those four years I visited many countries in Europe and North Africa. I am Puerto Rican and speak fluent Spanish. When VVAW was planning to send a political delegation to Nicaragua I was included because I speak Spanish and because having been to various countries gave me some authority to speak out on what I have seen and experienced as a Hispanic in the military and now in Nicaragua.

When I went to Nicaragua as part of the delegation that VVAW sent in order to show our support for the people of Nicaragua and their revolutionary struggle, and our solidarity with the Sandinistas, I saw also the opportunity for me to raise questions concerning the

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# Central American History
# U.S. INTERVENTION & REPRESSION

Central America has been an active place in the last 7 years as the people of Central America have struggled to end their social, political and economic oppression. The fundamental problem is that the U.S. (and to a lesser extent, West European countries and Japan) has kept them ensnared in a web of economic and political dependency that has made it impossible for these countries to make decisions that would be of benefit to their own people. Instead, decisions are made to benefit banks and corporations abroad. This is not new: the U.S. began its interventions in Central America before the U.S. Civil War when so called "filibusters" invaded and briefly held parts of Nicaragua. The U.S. intervention was increased by the building of the Panama Canal, as the powerful U.S. fleet backed up by U.S. money (dollar diplomacy) gained control or powerful influence among the governments of the region.

The most well known of the U.S. interventions of this period resulted in the invasion by the U.S. Marines of Nicaragua where the U.S. fought a 7-year war with General Augusto Sandino. The U.S. was finally forced to withdraw its troops in 1933, but got its revenge when the U.S. armed and trained National Guard, commanded by General Anastasio Somoza murdered Sandino in 1934. The resulting Somoza dictatorship lasted through 2 generations of Somoza's and 45 years.

The dictatorship ended in 1979 when after 45 years of no elections, democracy, freedom of speech and frequent murders by Somoza-hired assassins, the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (The FSLN) overthrew Somoza. Interestingly enough, this was the first time a party of the Socialist International (the international political association that includes the ruling parties of Spain, Greece, Sweden, Peru and the main opposition parties of Great Britain, France and Germany) had come to power by armed revolution. This choice was necessitated by the total refusal of the Somozas--backed by the U.S. government--to hold anything even resembling the Phillipine-style free elections.

Along with the fall of the Somoza dictatorship, there was a massive upsurge of Salvadoreans against their regime in the late '70's. El Salvador has been ruled by an oligarchy that has systematically frozen out of participation in the nation's political life all other forces in that society, including workers, peasants, intellectuals, small businessmen. As these other sectors of society increasingly refused to be denied participation, and as the deepening Central American economic crisis forced people into motion to survive, the response of the oligarchy and its military became increasingly savage. Death squads, set up by the CIA, and soldiers systematically began to kidnap and execute opponents or those defending the poor and weak. Their victims included Archbishop Oscar Romero, assassinated at mass, 4 U.S. religious women who were raped and murdered, the 6 top leaders of the Revolutionary Democratic Front, a coalition of the Christian Social Movement (a Christian Democratic organization) and the Democratic Revolutionary Movement( A Social Democratic party). These last were kidnapped by soldiers and tortured and executed. And in the early '80's these death squads murdered by some estimates 30,000 Salvadorans. But this slaughter only strengthened the insurgent movement which took control of one third of the country and which now controls some 15% of the population.

*U.S. adviser trains Costa Rican civil guard. Washington's strategy relies on local forces, not U.S. troops.*

In Guatemala, there has been almost continual and naked military rule since 1954 when the U.S. armed and trained a mercenary army to overthrow the elected government of Arbeaz (this government's great sin was to expropriate the property of the United Fruit Company). In the last 30 years some 100,000 Guatemalans have been killed or disappeared. As in El Salvador, an increasingly effective insurgency was developing.

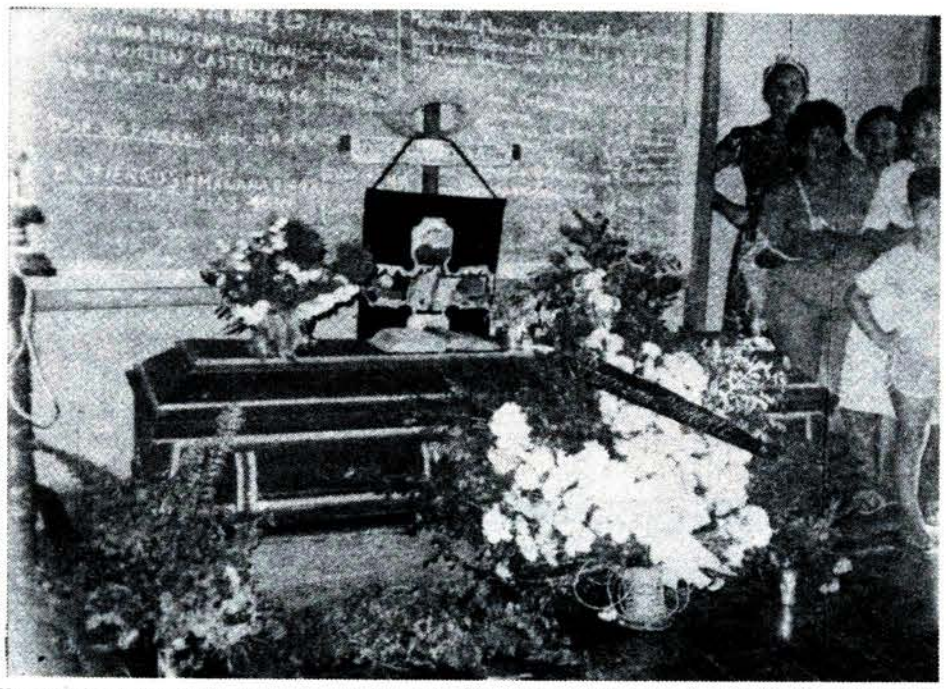
The U.S. response has been to pour in huge amounts of aid, as it pumped up the armies of El Salvador and Guatemala from 15,000 men to over 50,000 each, and in the case of El Salvador, the Air Force was dramatically expanded to over 100 planes. U.S. aid to El Salvador jumped from about $15 million a year under Carter, to over $500 million by 1985. In Guatemala the insurgents were temporarily put on the defensive by the Army tactic of killing everyone they could find in contested areas (this description of their tactics is from a BBC analysis). In Honduras the U.S. created a mercenary army of 15,000 "Contras" and tremendously expanded its own military presence in that strategically placed country, to give it a base from which to go into Nicaragua, Guatemala or El Salvador as the situation seems to require.

In no way is this a haphazard and aimless escalation of U.S. intervention in the region. Faced with the failure of President Carter 's policies to save U.S. interests in the area, the chief Central America experts of the incoming Reagan Administration met in New Orleans in 1980 to map out a new plan of action. Ignoring the terrible conditions facing the people of Central America, these "experts" blamed the crisis totally on Cuban-Soviet intervention, and set out a time table for the resolution of the Central American crisis. First the insurgents in Guatemala would be brought under control. Then the even more dangerous and advanced rebellion in El Salvador was to be liquidated. Third the Sandinista government would be destabilized. And finally, the U.S. would put an end to *Fidel Castro's Cuba once and* for all. All of this was to be finished by the end of 1982!

But the problems of Central America are too serious to be resolved anymore by slaughter and massive U.S. military and economic aid. As the region's economy nosedives, those resisting the U.S.-supported regimes have been continuously reinforced by increasingly desparate and sophisticated supporters among the general population. Today, the U.S. supported regimes and mercenaries continue to lose ground. The Salvadoran Army increasingly refuses to fight, and the insurgents have taken the battle to the entire country. The Guatemalan insurgency is resurging; while faced with an economic catastrophe the Army there has been forced to hand over the presidency to an elected civilian and tremendous mass movements are being unleashed. The Contras have been strategically defeated and are only an annoyance to the Sandinista government.

Thus the Reagan Administration is faced with the choice of either learning to live with the fall of their dependent regimes and the creation of independent ones or with sending in U.S. troops. But this latter would lead to massive international condemnation and protest at home, and would only accomplish its objectives at tremendous political and economic cost, if at all.

--Evan Douthit
Editor, Central American News Update



GUARDIANPHOTO BY JOAN KRUCKEWITT

*Here's where the money's going: Friends mourn the death of Swiss agronomist Mauricio Demierre, who was killed along with five Nicaraguan women when their truck was ambushed by contras. The contras detonated a mine as the truck passed, then machine-gunned the survivors.*

# "...I Started Sobbing"
# CHILDREN, VICTIMS OF A POLICY OF LIES & THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR

Mike Gillen with children in Nicaragua.

The image of a 13-year-old boy dealing with the recent amputation of his leg in a military hospital in Jinotega, Nicaragua--it sticks in my mind, as do the images of children I once knew in Vietnam 17 years ago. Also maimed. Also old before their time. Also victims of a U.S. foreign policy based on lies and the almighty dollar.

If the North American people (as they are called in Nicaragua) could only see what their tax dollars are being spent on in Central America ...

They'd see, as we did on the farm cooperative near La Trinidad, children scrambling into their bunker--where they've had to go several times in the last year, to hide, shivering, because of Contra "freedom fighter" activitiy in the area (which has included the killing of children in similar bunkers elsewhere in Nicaragua).

And I wonder...will any of these kids wake up screaming, in the middle of the night, years later, at the memory? Probably. These are the more insidious effects of Reagan's policy, of support for the Contra murderers.

Health workers, school teachers, coffee pickers, pregnant women, young children and old people. They are all fair game for the Contras who Reagan has called the "moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers." There is plenty of documentation and testimony on the nature of Contra brutality in Nicaragua. No wonder they can't hold any ground there; they are not exactly popular.

The most graphic signs of Reagan's War, of course, are in hospitals, civilian and military alike. A claymore does not distinguish between one and the other. And, thanks to Reagan, again, the Contras seem to have plenty of Claymores. Like the one the Secretary General of the Uno de Segovia Region showed us in Esteli, along with parts of an American helicopter that got shot down somewhere along the border.

The victims were there, with blood-soaked bandages, in La Trinidad and Jinotega. Sixteen-year-olds. Fifteen-year olds. Fourteen-year-olds. Some barely able to talk through the twitching of their young bodies.

The victims were there, too, in the modern military rehabilitation center we visited in Managua, where one young veteran showed us how he planed a block of wood with only one forearm left. And another did it standing on the one leg he had left.

Still, they gave us a pretty rousing welcome there and elsewhere. They are friendly, generous people who repeated over and over again that it's not the North American people that they have anything against; it's "your bad government." They know where to assign the blame for their suffering, for the needless war.

As Comandante Omar Cabezas told us in Managua in the Ministry of the Interior building, "If my neighbor sends his dog over to bit me, I'm not going to discuss it with the dog (read Contras); I'm going to take it up with the owner (read Reagan)." Yeah, they know where to place the blame.

Perhaps the most lingering image for me, of the effects of Reagan's policy in Nicaragua, will be the faces of the war orphans. The ones we saw in Esteli, in the north, and in the little town of San Marcos south of Managua. They number in the thousands throughout the country. Oh, if I could bring them all up to stand on the front lawn of the White House for Ronnie and Nancy to smile upon...

It all caught up with me a week or so after getting back from Nicaragua. I was shaving, and I was thinking about those orphans Ron Arm and Bob Spicher and I visited in San Marcos; the one who kept coming up to us and saying--asking--"Papa? Papa?" What the hell could you say--yeah, I'm your papa and I'm going to take you home, and everything will be all right? I couldn't say a damn thing. And standing in front ot that mirror that day I started sobbing, and then the tears started rolling down my cheeks right into the shaving cream. It had been a long time. "Jesus Christ, what the fuck are we doing to those people!" I said aloud for only my cats to hear.

We've seen some of the effects of Reagan's policy in Nicaragua. You can only see so much in a week, but it was enough. It was depressing and it's still depressing. It was frustrating before we went down, knowing what those fucks in Washington are doing--or trying to do--with the funds they send either directly or indirectly (through Israel, for example) to the Contras.

But now that we've been there, and seen it, and experienced the warmth and hospitality and friendship of the people of Nicaragua, and enjoyed the beauty of the countryside--it's even more frustrating. Hopefully, no further funds will be voted, at least, for the Contras (this was written before the last donation of taxpayers money to the CIA's thugs). Hopefully, there will be no invasion of Nicaragua. Hopefully, the American people have learned something from Vietnam (the Nicaraguan people certainly have; as Cabezas told us, "We learned, among other things, that you don't have to have fancy boots to fight a war...").

But, then again, all it takes is one fabricated "incident" to "justify" destroying Nicaragua further "to save it."

There's a fund-raising party in my neighborhood tomorrow night for the Bertah Calderon Hospital in Managua. I've been asked to speak at it. I think I'll be there....

--Mike Gillen
VVAW NY/NJ

## VVAW Delegation to Nicaragua

*Bill Davis, Oak Park, IL U.S.Air Force
*Bill Branson, Chicago, IL U.S. Army
*Clarence Fitch, Jersey City, New Jersey; U.S.Marine Corps
*John Lindquist, Milwaukee, WI; U.S. Marine Corps
*Mike Terry, Chicago, IL U.S. Navy
*Billy Curmano, Rushforn, Minnesota; U.S. Army
*Bob Spicher, Chicago, IL; U.S. Army
*Manuel Martinez, Chicago, IL, U.S. Navy
*Ron Arm, Madison, WI; Special Forces
*Mike Pahios, Brooklyn, NY U.S. Marine Corps
*Mike Gillen, Astoria, NY U.S.Merchant Marine
* Niels Nielsen, Los Angeles CA
*Hector Acosta, Milwaukee, WI; U.S. Army

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# IN EL SALVADOR WITH A 'NAM VET

I was in El Salvador during November 1984 as an observer for Vietnam Veterans Against the War to the Human Rights Commission's first Congress. We heard testimony from people of all walks of life--lawyers, medical personnel, teachers, campesinos--relating to the continued use of torture, and the increase of incredible oppression by the forces of the Salvadorian rulers: specifically, the killing and "disappearing" by government forces of unarmed, neutral medical workers in the countryside; the lack of any legal recourse by citizens, justified by periodic suspension of the country's constitution; mass terror and destruction of the population by uprooting entire towns and villages, often by bombing or military operations killing most of the inhabitants; the increase of homeless due to the increase of air attacks in the countryside; the continued use of death squads to wipe out normal political and community activity seen as in opposition to the ruling group in El Salvador.

Tom Wetzler in front of HQ captured by F.M.L.N. in la Palma

Members of "Mothers and Families of the Disappeared."

Later, independent of the Commission, I went into the countryside to see for myself what I'd learned. Besides verifying the above, I saw government refugee camps almost empty, the few who remained explaining that most had fled to the camps in the capitol due to army attacks against the camp's population. This was in the province of San Vincente. Frequently I saw homes and areas of population which had been destroyed by artillery or air action.

In areas under control of FMLN I found the overwhelming majority of equipment and weapons to be of recent U.S. make and issue. One guerilla leader asked me to thank President Reagan for his M-16, recently captured in an action in Suchitoto. I saw also that civilians were terrified in the presence of government troops but not in guerilla-controlled areas.

Back in San Salvador I spoke and listened to members of the political right who impresse me with their total disregard for democracy or justice but were obvious in their sense of arrogance and power. Later I spoke to U.S. embassy staff, including then-Ambassador Pickering who answered questions about our policy in El Salvador with a double-speak reminiscent of Vietnam. One embassy official told me, when asked why the realities of El Salvador were not reflected in embassy statements and reports, "It's not our job to inform the American public about El Salvador, it's our job to uphold the present Administration's policy."

During my time in El Salvador, the U.S. Embassy had refused visas to four members of the "Mothers and Family of the Disappeared and Political Prisoners" who had been invited by the Robert Kennedy Foundation in Washington, DC, to receive an award for human rights work. The same week Roberto D'Aubasson, identified by U.S. intelligence agencies as a leader in death squad activity, was admitted to speak at Georgetown University in Washington.

Finally, I spoke to U.S. military personnel who were not sure about anything about El Salvador but were "just doing my job." After my experience in Southeast Asia, I returned from El Salvador with a terrible sense of deja vu.

--Tom Wetzler
VVAW San Antonio

(This article is taken from testimony given to the *"Citizens* Hearing on Central America," San Antonio, Texas, March 21, 1986.)

## Reagan's Boys
# CONTRA INVASION U.S. TERRORISM

In late March four groups of heavily armed contras--nearly 6000 men total--were posted on the northern border of Nicaragua. The first group penetrated 15 kilometers into Nicaraguan territory when they were engaged by the army. Immediately troops were placed on maximum alert and deployed along the border. While a running battle developed with the first group of Contras, it became apparent that they were merely a feint to draw the attention of the Nicaraguan army so that one or more of the remaining groups could open the way for the bulk of the Contra forces to invade in strength. As these additional forces attempted to cross the border they were met and stopped dead by military units in a series of firefights right along the border. In the process of smashing this Contra offensive, Nicaraguan and Contra forces crossed and re-crossed the border many times. At the close of the action, Nicaraguan troops again resumed defensive positions.

This is the context of the fabled "invasion" that Reagan proceeded to crow about. Congressmen and Senators brayed in inflated self-righteous anger while the President of Honduras enjoyed his Holy Week holiday (though it was his country supposedly "invaded"). U.S. helicopters and crews roared to the border loaded with Honduran troops while newsmen, looking for bellicose quotes found the Honduran government buildings practically deserted. Defeated Contra rabble, streaming back to their well-equipped camps screamed "the sky is falling," "the Nicas are coming," for all to hear and forget how they got their asses kicked.

In fact there was an invasion, one overlooked by the media as inconsequential. The havoc those 6000 Contras would have caused is beyond imagination for most citizens of the U.S. Unfortunately, for Nicaraguans, one's own family or the people down the road can provide living evidence of the way the U.S.-backed and led Contra terrorists spread "freedom and democracy." Hospitals filled with 13-16 year old kids without legs and arms, pictures of dead sons and daughters, children filled with terror, crouching in holes while parents (farmers) fought like animals with kidnappers "made in the U.S.A.": these are the legacy of previous visits by Reagan's fellow Contras.

One need not speculate what devastation on population centers Reagan would unleash if, for instance, 6000 terrorists crossed over from Mexico and attempted to sack Mexicali. What measures would Shultz and Weinburger propose if, for instance, the government of France bankrolled the enemy? We all know that U.S. troops would rush up to the line and stop shooting, wouldn't they? (Just like they stopped when chasing Pancho Villa.) Yet this is what North Americans (particularly politicians looking for a way to be "anti-communist") would expect an infinitely poorer and less technologically advanced country to do in the midst of a trackless jungle. Oh, didn't you know? There is no painted line on that border with little white stones and candy-striped gates.

In the midst of growing awareness of their actual role as a CIA army, amid think-tank declarations of their defeat, what better time for the Contras to stage a show of force than the Contressional vote on "humanitarian aid?" When the word of a panicked defeat reached Washington, the cries of "invasion" sounded. Frantic calls went out to the Honduran government and our allies. But no Gulf of Tonkin materialized. It was all a rather shabby show and soon was left to die a silent death.

Months from now this incident will be referred to in some speech by our leaders as evidence of the Sandinista/Communist aggression that is bound to sweep up Latin America and engulf San Antonio. It would almost be a laughing matter except for the absolute truth that some very brave and young people died in that battle defending their country, absolutely dead.

Bill Branson
VVAW

# POLITICAL FREEDOMS & MINORITY PARTIES IN NICARAGUA

Continued From page 5

## RELIGION

Catholic mass at La Eglesia De Santa Maria De Los Angeles.

Church in Nicaragua and the propaganda raised against it here in the U.S.

We were in Nicaragua from April 12 to the 19th; on Sunday members of the delegation went to a Catholic Church in Managua, La Iglesia De Santa Maria De Los Angeles (also known as the Church of the Peasants). The Church is fathered by Uriel Molina, a native of Nicaragua. Father Molina is himself in the center of a lot of controversy between himself and the Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo because of their different stands on the major political issues in Nicaragua. The Archbishop supports the Contras; Father Molina supports the revolution. In his message delivered on that Sunday, Father Molina criticized Reagan for trying to appear as a very religious person and as a spokesman for the Church in Nicaragua and as self-proclaimed defender of the faith and religion for the people of Nicaragua.

In the message Father Molina talked of Reagan and his TV presentation in March where the President accused the Sandinistas of persecuting the Church. He noted that in his speeches, Reagan always made allusions to God, religion, Christianity and the Holy Father, and that he even ended many of them with the traditional "God Bless You" of the men and women of the Church. Yet his acts are far from Christian.

During the week we visited with many groups. We went to hospitals and orphanages and I could see how the Church has played a big role; it is very much as part of their lives for the people of Nicaragua. They still attend Church, they still meet to hold Bible study. The Church plays a big role in one orphanage we visited just outside Managua; the orphanage is filled with kids without families because of the war with the Contras, or because the mother is alone and can no longer care for a little one. The priest who runs the orphanage has instructed the children in religion. From what I could see and from the people I talked to, I cannot say there is no freedom of religion in Nicaragua. We are led to believe differently so we will see Nicaragua as the Reagan Administration wants us to see Nicaragua--as a Communist cancer that must be stopped before it spreads.

There are only good things I can say about the people of Nicaragua and their desire to be left alone to determine their course. I want to thank those who made it possible for me to go to Nicaragua and to be a part of a struggle to see Nicaragua libre.

--Manny Martinez
VVAW Chicago

We hear a lot of Ronald Reagan talk about totalitarian Nicaragua where all political freedoms are dead. Well, our experience on the VVAW trip to Nicaragua showed the exact opposite of the picture usually portrayed in the U.S. press. We had a number of unique experiences: two of these were a meeting at the National Assembly for an explanation of the process of writing a new Constitution, and a meeting with the Popular Social Christian Party (PPSC). It all happened on our last full day in Nicaragua.

The Sandinista's started working on parts of the Constitution before getting rid of Somoza. After Parliament was elected in 1984, a resolution was passed to start discussion on a Constitution.

The 1984 elections created a President, Vice-President, and 96 representatives--one for every 30,000 people. Sixty-one seats went to the Sandinistas, 14 to the Conservatives, 9 to the Liberals, 6 to the PPSC, 2 to the Marxist Liberals, 2 to the Socialists, and 2 to the Communist Party. The Legislature creates day-to-day laws; a part of its task is creation of a Constitution.

In August of 1985 they came up with the principles of unity for the first draft of the Constitution. This draft has 221 articles. Seventy-five percent have been approved by consensus; the other 25% are still being discussed. There are differences: the Conservatives say "Democracy for everyone," while the Communist Party says, "only voting rights for workers and peasants." As the Sandinistas told us, most of the Assembly says democratic rights should be for everyone.

The draft will be presented in May of 1987 to the country in a series of meetings--80 around the country.

Three of us were able to make a meeting with the PPSC, an opposition group, and we used the morning's discussion with the Sandinistas concerning the Constitution as back-

Please Turn To page 11

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From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets what we need only when forced to do so--that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can accomplish, but when veterans unite to fight together, we can do much. VVAW has seen some real successes: we helped to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, we helped get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, we helped to win (to a great extent) amnesty for war resisters. With other vets groups we helped to stir up enough public furor that the Veterans Administration took its first halting steps to look for an answer to Agent Orange poisoning, and recognized what VVAW used to call Post Vietnam Syndrome when we were leading rap groups in 1970 (and is now called "post-traumatic stress or delayed stress syndrome") as a service-connected disability.

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets. Sometimes this has brought us into conflict with the "traditional" vets organizations. While they have tended to stand behind the U.S. government and its various war-like manueverings, VVAW has always asked "Why?" We've opposed moves toward war, fight against registration and the draft which will follow, opposed inflated defense expenditures, welcomed vets with "bad" discharges into the organization and fought to get the discharge system dropped entirely from the military.

We know what it means to have been used once by the government and its corporate backers, and then be thrown away with a bad GI Bill, wretched healthcare, Agent Orange ravaging our bodies, vivid memories of the war often ravaging our minds, no jobs, and all the multitude of other problems Vietnam vets often face. We do not intend to see our children go through the same thing in the next war for somebody else's profit!

***Vietnam Veterans Against the War***

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**Bill Davis**
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VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local projects and programs under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

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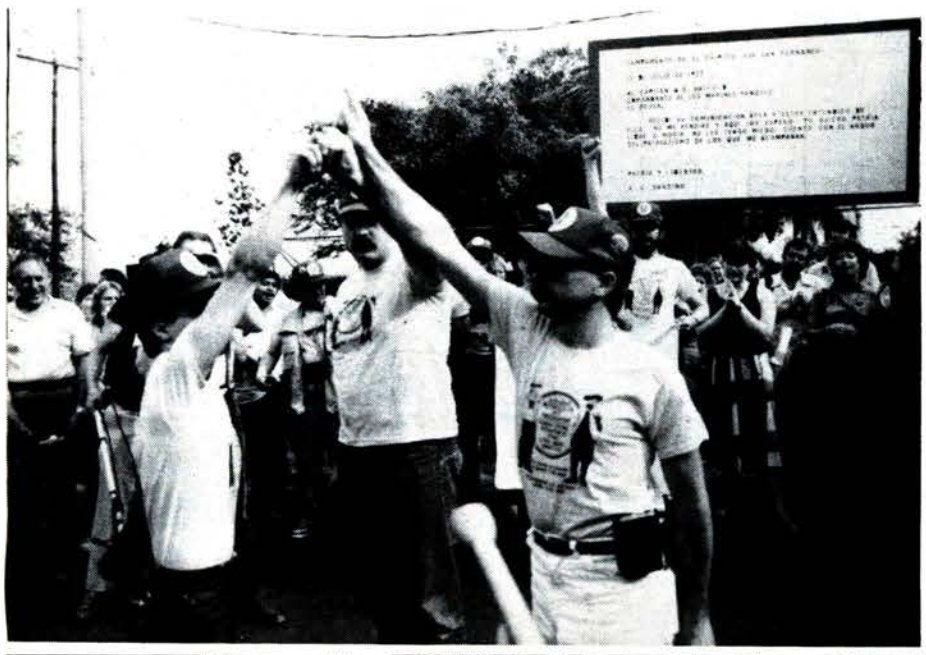
## BY-LAWS OF VVAW

1. The name of the organization shall be Vietnam Veterans Against the War.
2. Membership in the organization is open to all veterans (regardless of discharge) and to non-veterans interested in joining together to build a veterans movement. While VVAW is made up primarily of Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans and their families, the organization also welcomes veterans from other eras and non-veterans.
3. Membership requirements include filling out a membership form, paying the $5 initiation fee and $1 monthly dues to the national office. Other requirements, not in conflict with national requirements, may be added by local chapters.
4. Local VVAW chapters will decide on their own chapter structure, by-laws and dues. Chapters will, to the best of their ability, work on the national programs of VVAW plus whatever local campaigns they decide on which are not in opposition to national programs.
5. National meetings of the organization, open to all members, will be held at least once yearly. A National Steering Committee, made up of the national officers, the regional officers, & an elected representative from each chapter shall meet as necessary. Such meetings may consist of phone calls to the chapter representatives if necessary.
6. National officers are elected at national meetings for a period of a year. They are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization, for speaking on behalf of the national organization, and for the publication and content of THE VETERAN and "The Guidon."
7. Regional coordinators, as needed will be elected at national meetings to serve 1 year terms; regional coordinators will facilitate and coordinate regional activities, aid the building of local chapters, and provide input from chapters into the national office.
8. Policies, programs and positions of VVAW nationally will, as much as possible, be decided at national meetings. If that is not possible, such decisions will be made by the National Steering Committee or, in emergencies, by the National Office.

Continued From page 5

# VVAW EMBASSY DEMO



Manuel Martinez, Ron Arm and Billy Curmano spill their blood to protest U.S. intervention.

crowd of machete-waving revolutionaries whipped to a frenzy by the so-called Marxist Sandinistas, but usually a dignified statement of peace and opposition to U.S. policy in Nicaragua by the American community in the country. Not the crowd from the Intercontinental Hotel, but these are Americans who have taken up some type of residence in Nicaragua.

On Thursday, April 17th, the demonstration at the Embassy took on a new significance. Massive marches had occurred the day before in every city in Nicaragua, two in Managua, to celebrate the lack of success in the U.S. vote on Contra aid. Coupling this event with the U. S. raid on Libya, the numbers of Americans at the Embassy gates had grown to 3 or 4 times the normal amount.

Members of the VVAW delegation, who had been told not to expect too large a group, looked at the sizeable gathering with some surprise as they arrived by bus.

Off the bus, the VVAW delegation formed in columns of twos, VVAW banner in the front, and marched toward the crowd, many of whom were in a moving picket line in the street in front of the Embassy.

As we drew closer, in step, we began to chant:

"Reagan, Reagan, he's no good,
Send him back to Hollywood.
If he'd been in 'Nam back then,
He'd never made it home again.
Sound off ...."

The crowd roared its approval as the VVAW delegation neatly peeled off in a single column into the moving picket line. People came out of the crowd to greet us with handshakes and hugs. One long-time member of VVAW, who had hitchhiked up from Rivas where he works as a nurse stood by smiling until we dragged him into line with us.

The picket line gradually moved into the crowd as the program began. People representing various peace and anti-intervention groups gave brief messages of solidarity. When VVAW's turn came, Clarence Fitch, one of the co-chairs of the VVAW delegation, began to speak of our feelings and impressions of the delegations' experiences in Nicaragua. As the crowd pressed forward to avoid missing a word, across the street people and marines inside the Embassy actually came up to the gate to hear the VVAW portion of the program. Later we learned that rarely if ever did they show themselves inside the compound.

As Clarence finished his presentation, Manuel Martinez from Chicago VVAW stepped forward, pointing at the Embassy, and said, before a hushed crowd, "The war machine is oiled with blood of innocent victims." Ron Arm, VVAW Madison, stepped out next, stating loudly, "If there is any American blood to be drawn in Nicaragua, let it be a gift to help heal the wounds of the sons and daughters of Nicaragua who have suffered at the hands of the U.S.-Contra aggression."

At this point Billy Curmano of Minnesota VVAW spoke out: "We, as Vietnam vets, know the pain and agony of spilling blood on foreign soil." The three VVAW members moved into a circle facing each other. Removing their VVAW buttons they pricked a finger drawing a drop of blood. Forming an arch with the bleeding fingers they knelt to the ground and pressed the blood to the pavement, saying in unison, "Let this be the last American blood spilled on Nicaraguan soil. Viva Nicaragua Libre." The crowd responded, "No pasaran, No Pasaran!" and broke into cheers.

Across the street the marines in civies at the gate no longer stood arms folded with bravado smiles; as VVAW finished they turned and silently walked back to the Embassy.

Following the program VVAW mingled with the crowd until time to leave, then formed in columns of two and marched back to the bus chanting as before.

Behind us, the street was clearing, traffic was moving through again, and the weekly assault on the Embassy had subsided.

Aboard the bus, we in the VVAW delegation were jubilant. Our action has been a success. We had strengthened our bonds with the American community in Nicaragua, left our distinctive calling card of action at the U. S. Embassy, and fulfilled our obligation to our VVAW brothers and sisters demonstrating a continent away in North America.

--Bill Davis
VVAW National Office

Continued From page 9

# FREEDOMS

ground for our questions.

While the PPSC is not being put forward as a model of a great political party, its existence shows something about political freedoms in Nicaragua. They long for democracy, a process denied to them since 1927 when the U.S. Marine Corps invaded for a 3rd. time and set up Somoza as dictator.

The PPSC was described by its representative as composed of Christian workers. They told us that out of one million votes, they got 65,000. The party is nine years old and had split over the issue of whether or not to run candidates in the elections. This part of the party chose to run in opposition to the Sandinistas who they called a "military junta." They described themselves as anti-imperialist, anti-Somoza, anti-contra and not pro-Sandinista. Their big fear was that some of the Sandinistas did not believe in God and a few even were Marxists.

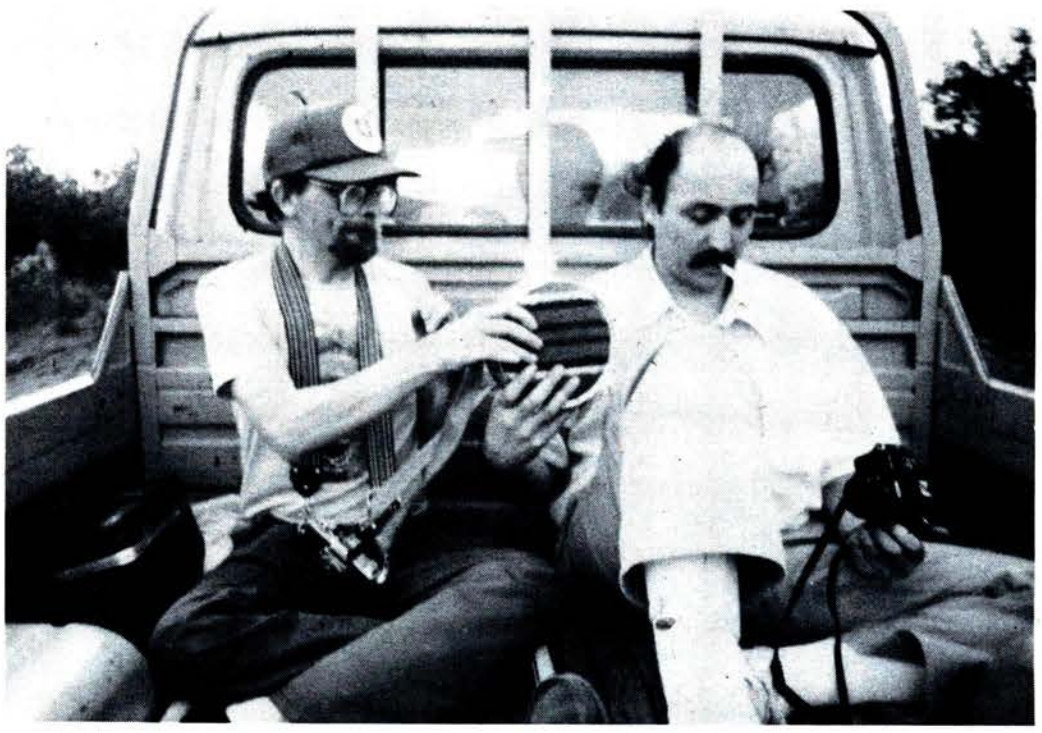
We asked them if they were harrassed during the 1984 elections and why they thought the Sandinistas got so many votes. They responded that each of the 7 parties received $500,000 to campaign. They complained that the campaign was too short (only 3 months). They did say, though, that there has been hardly any harrassment compared to what U.S. press said had happened. What little did take place was individual, not a Sandinista policy. They felt the Sandinistas did better because they were better organized, having led a nation into armed insurrection against Somoza and having consolidated power for 6 years before the elections. They said their own political support was growing and wanted the Sandinistas to hold municipal level elections in the near future.

We asked them how they viewed the war and if they thought the U.S. would invade? He blamed Reagan for egging on the contra's with money. He was against "false Reagan propaganda" on the contra's and said increased war would only lead to more "death, destruction and loss of civil liberties for the people of Nicaragua, and a further move to the left by the government."

There are the beginnings of democractic debate in Nicaragua, particularly around the new Constitution. Just as important, U.S. Marines no longer count the ballots! If we can force Ronald Reagan to stop aid to the contras, and to de-militarize Central America, democracy can flourish in Nicaragua. If the war continues and worsens, a good relationship between the U.S. and Nicaragua will be lost forever, and the U.S. standing in Central America will be jeopardized. Right now it's not too late, but time is running out for peaceful solutions.

--John Lindquist

# "IF YOU DON'T COME HOME IN A BODY BAG...."



Bob Spicher and Ron Arm exchanging ideas about the trip.

A group of us from the delegation was walking in Matagalpa after 9 in the evening looking for some place where the locals hang out. What we found was that the locals don't hang out, or at least after 9 they don't.

Walking along we found a place open and sure enough there were some more people from our delegation. There was a good conversation going on with some of the Nicaraguans who were telling us how proud they were of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas and the revolution. The one doing most of the talking was a girl about 18; her sister of 14 was sitting there cranking out fantastic poetry. They were very positive about the future of Nicaragua and of the Sandinistas and we quickly became friends. They had a little business selling fruit juice and rum and some other odds and ends. We ordered some fruit juice and a soft drink made from corn, and some rum--they refused to take our money. Here we were from some scumbag country that wants to bomb the shit out of them and they were giving us free drinks.

After talking for awhile about Nicaragua they woke up their 3 year old sister and opened a book with photos of the revolutionary heroes and they would say which one is Sandino and she would point him out, which one is Fonseca and she would point him out. I found this enthusiasm everywhere I went.

So Reagan, the Sandinistas have no popular support?? Perhaps you misspoke again. Misspoke my ass.

When we left there we were walking back to the hotel and we were stopped by a soldier carrying his AK-47 over his shoulder and he asked us what we were doing that late at night. We told him what we were doing, that we were returning to our hotel. He smiled and shook our hands and walked on down the street. Maybe this is repression as I've heard, but if something like this had happened when I was in Vietnam, the poor suckers would have been lying on the ground while they were searched. That is, if we decided to be nice about it!

We stopped at a farm co-op that had a lot of cattle. There were kids everywhere with big smiles and looking very healthy. I started photographing, forgetting politics for awhile. I thought with all these kids it's like when I was a little kid at my grandparents' farm on a holiday, kids everywhere. I almost started looking for my cousins. Walking along photographing we came to an underground bunker and three of the kids were asked if they ever had to use it. They said they had to run to it about 3 times because of Contra attacks and reality came back. The kids were asked what they felt when they had to run to the bunker; "We were very afraid," they said. Damn--all these kids having to go through this shit because of our government.

Our last evening three of us--Bill Davis, Ron Arm and myself--decided to go find something to eat. We found a cab and asked the driver to take us to Sandys, a place where they make hamburgers with a place in the back for kids called Sandino land. When we got there it was closed so we told the cab driver to take us to the nearest place that sold food. I thought he was going to drive forever, but finally he pulled in to this place called the Munic Inn, an outdoor cafe; the place was packed and we were the only North Americans there. We walked in and sat down. The place was full of Nicaraguans, partying and having friendly arguments. Groups of musicians were going from table to table playing guitars and singing. People would be in the middle of some argument or discussion and the musicians would come up and start singing and everyone at the table would stop whatever they were doing and listen. Some would start singing.

After awhile the people at the table would start a conversation again and the musicians knew it was time to move to a new table. The waiter came to our table to take our order; we only wanted a little to eat so we ordered 3 chicken burritos in our best Spanish which was not worth a damn. After the wiater left, up comes a young man who had obviously consumed great quantities of rum and asked if he could sit at our table. "Sure, great--sit down."

His English wasn't the greatest and neither was our Spanish. He told us he was from Panama and that his family was in the U.S, in Los Angelos but that he could not get into the U.S. because he had a Nicaraguan passport. He asked us how we liked Nicaragua. He said we were brothers and so on. When the communication broke down because of the language barrier we simply said we are brothers and shook hands once again. In the mean time our food came and we looked up and what did we see? Not 3 burritos, but 3 whole chickens with potatoes and the works. We knew we could not leave a lot of food behind with so many poor people around--we didn't want to look like a bunch of gringos. So we dug in. I was so tired by this time I could hardly chew at this point. I no longer cared what I looked like. Then Ron reached inside his chicken and says, "What's this?" He pulls out a chicken foot. I wonder what made him so special--the rest of us didn't get one.

I certainly did not find the repression I heard about in this place. Could the U.S. government have lied again? Everywhere I went I saw people with AK-47's and never once did I feel threatened. It's so clear to me now: if you want to repress people you give about 400,000 citizens automatic weapons so they can overthrow you any time they want. I found that what Nicaraguans want is peace and a chance to build their lives; they are not going back to the old Somoza days and they are not going to stand by and let the U.S. invade them.

A word for any young man who thinks he might join up and that it would be a neat thing to help invade Nicaragua. Nicaragua has a very good army with 19 and 20 year olds who have already 5 years of combat experience. They have been climbing those very steep hills and know them very well. Nicaragua also has a militia which will take no shit and they know just what they are doing. If either one of these don't get you, some old lady with her AK-47 will shoot your balls off. If you don't come home in a body bag, you will come home carrying your balls in a paper bag.

---Bob Spicher

# "T

When the VVAW delegation began to come together as a cohesive group in late 1985, we planned to go to Nicaragua as organized as possible to gather facts and data to relate to the American people on our return. The delegation was, for the most part, sympathetic to the Sandinista revolution and opposed to current U.S. policies aimed at the Nicaraguan people--support for the contras, the trade embargo placed on their country. As Vietnam vets we felt we'd seen a lot of the world and that we had a good handle on what was occurring in Nicaragua based on our discussion with others and the reading we'd done. Nothing in fact could have prepared us for what we were to experience.

As we left the plane at the airport and passed through customs, a large crowd waited outside of the customs area. We presumed they were there to greet other passengers, but slowly began to realize we were the only people left in the terminal area. People in the crowd smiled shyly or reached out to touch us. Some held up their children to see. A group of people representing the press surged forward taking pictures and throwing questions at everyone.

I was stunned momentarily as I began to realize how important the Nicaraguans thought our delegation's visit was. By the next day, radio and newspaper reports covered the country, and people would approach us throughout our stay to say they had read about our visit and to tell us how pleased they were to have us in their country.

On more than one occasion the buildings and trees and temperatures in the evenings combined to literally look and feel like areas in Vietnam, but the people didn't fit the screenplay of that Asian war. Smiling and inquisitive, the people in the cities and towns we saw walked about freely day and night and spoke openly their political opinions. Slogans on walls and political billboards were in evidence everywhere, not just the "frente" (the front as the Sandinistas are known) but those of all the parties, left and right in the opposition were also in plain sight.

The army was everywhere, men and women in uniform, all armed, but incredibly not oppressive or threatening. How different from so many armies we've seen. Absent was the swaggering military types, pushing through crowds, forcing their way to the front of lines, commandeering the best for themselves, threatening any who stood in their way.

Except for their uniforms and those on guard here and there, the army could have been invisible, standing patiently in line for the bus; the military vehicles carry as many civilian passengers as soldiers. For all the weapons they carried, not once did we see one taken from the shoulder or drawn in anger from the holster.

In Managua the war seems

# "THE WAR IS ALWAYS THERE, SOMETIMES JUST A MILE OR TWO AWAY"

Ron Arm, Clarence Fitch, Manuel Martinez, Mike Pahios, Bill Davis and Mike Gillen at the Ho Chi Minh Monument in Managua.

far away, as people spend the nights in restaurants and cafes until the wee hours. The city is alive in a near circle around the devastation of the 1971 earthquake. The ruins exist today in a monument to the millions of bucks of relief funds that Somoza pocketed, an act that definitely hastened the revolution.

The U.S. Embassy is bathed in moonlight looking every bit the part of Dracula's Castle that the singer Bruce Cockburn referred to as it looms above the city.

It is in the countryside, however, that the revolution is put to the test daily. The people are poor--very poor--and while their life is better now than it has ever been, the U.S. embargo (the U.S. government's refusal to allow any trade with Nicaragua) has simply denied them the little things we take for granted. Every bottle, bag, piece of plastic, any container is used over and over again. Batteries, flashlights, pens, pencils--these are gold. But the beggars are absent; children, for the most part, stand by politely for pencils or the "prized" baseball cards. Missing too are the armies of prostitutes and drug peddlers that seem to populate areas where American GI's are. Stories of this type of Americanization of Honduras begin to leak through and you begin to see vast differences in these two countries the size of Alabama and Mississippi.

The war is always there, sometimes just a mile or two away, and the physical evidence is not so far. In the rich agricultural province of Uno La Segovia, the "bread basket" of Nicaragua, the burnt civilian bus lies overturned by the side of the road. In the wards of civilian and military hospitals, the young men and women lie wounded, the 13-year-old with one leg in the arms of his father, a militia man. Enough carnage is there that some can't see for tears welling up and clogged throats. The reality of Nicaragua, a 19-year-old young man four years in the army, wounded five times, hardened in 50 battles or skirmishes, eager to rejoin his unit, an uncertain future.

Leaving Chicago for Nicaragua

What can be said of the Contras that people haven't heard? They make war on women and children. They kidnap entire families. They attack unarmed civilians, health workers, teachers. They've never won a battle or skirmish, they've never held so much as a single small village. They are populated top to bottom by Somoza's former "La Guardia." They're by and large a gang of criminals who shoot up schools and homes and other strategic targets that can't shoot back. The common and poorest of Nicaraguans loathe and hate the Contras. These U.S. sponsored criminals will never gain the support of the people; they will carry on their activities as long as the funding lasts or the Sandinistas finally crush them.

In a community center near the town of Jinotega, we picked up spent bullets and rocket casings from a Contra attack a few nights before. The family next door in a house of mud and wood said the Contras boldly challenged the empty building to come out and fight. Another victory for Reagan's equipvalent of the U.S. "Founding Fathers." Sandinista officials everywhere, highest to the lowest were always patient and friendly, responding to even the most controversial question we had with good humor.

To a person, Nicaraguans are extremely concerned about a U.S. invasion, discussing how they will fight, calmly speaking of how they will die until the American people will have enough and end the war.

Unless you travel to Nicaragua, it is impossible to gauge the distortions in the U.S. press and media about the country, its people, the so-called "Marxist oppressive society," the censorship, the draft, the church--the subjects are endless. The portrayal to the American people is inaccurate, to be polite--absolute bullshit to be realistic.

Once outside the U.S. the apparent opposition to U.S. aggression in Nicaragua is overwhelming in the world press. The Contadora process has again and again vindicated the people of Nicaragua, and the U.S. press has time and again portrayed the Sandinistas as "the bad guys." Further, the press shows the rest of Central and South America firmly aligned with the Reagan Administration--a truly gross distortion.

Internationally, the Reagan Administration's efforts to ostracize Nicaragua have backfired and it is the U.S. that is becoming isolated politically around the world.

Hopefully, the words and pictures, videos of VVAW's delegation to Nicaragua will help to turn the tide in this country to the reality of U.S. policy in Nicaragua and all of Central America.

Bill Davis

## *Sharing Experiences*

# CONVERSATION AMONG AMERICANS

The painting "Three Women" by Axorca.

While traveling with the VVAW delegation in Nicaragua, I met several members of the North American community willing to share their experience with me. I found three language students studying in Esteli to be especially compelling. Victor was a Spanish Civil War and World War II vet who had driven a car from California to Managua where it was donated to Technica. He was with two young solidarity workers from Massachusetts, Christie Clark and Heather Randle. We sat down to dinner together one evening in Esteli and here are their personal stories.

Victor worked with the Peace and Freedom Party in California and had worked with a number of activist organizations including VVAW in the early '70's. His journey through Mexico was uneventful, but upon crossing the Guatemalan frontier he underwent what was to be only the first in a long series of thorough searches. This one was by the military, followed closely by a second search by the National Police. As he continued down the Pan American Highway, he was stopped three more times by soldiers while still in Guatemala.

Crossing into El Salvador required two more of the by-now familiar searches. Victor commented on meeting friendly people in both Guatemala and El Salvador, but he found the soldiers very tough. San Salvador appeared to be an armed garrison with everyone off the streets by 8 PM.

In Honduras, the soldiers were looking for bribes during both of his searches. During the first incident, Vic came up with a flashlight that seemed to satisfy the authorities, but the second group of soldiers was looking for cigarettes. Being a nonsmoker, it took Vic a little longer to get out of this one.

He finally arrived at the Nicaraguan border about 2:30 PM, but no one was getting through. A substation had been blown up the previous night, so everyone just slept on the road or waited. The soldiers were friendly and outgoing, finally letting people through at 7 AM the next morning.

Victor delievered the car and began traveling around with a video crew. Next, he lived with a Nicaraguan family and eventually began studying at the language school in Esteli.

During his time in Nicaragua, Victor saw no signs of oppression. He attended religious service with Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses. He met two people who were open Contra supporters. The first one told of a conspiracy to deprive people of their religion, but obviously Victor had seen religious freedom with his own eyes. He felt many of the Contras were influenced by propaganda that was contrary to reality.

The second Contra was a truck driver and Seventh-Day Adventist. He was a decent guy, following his own convictions, but once again his fears were not justified by the apparent conditions.

Christie Clark had been in Nicaragua well over a year when I met her. She had flown through San Salvador in January, 1985, and been held under military arrest in a harrowing experience. The authorities suspected her and all North Americans with her of being Peace Marchers. They were held at gun point on a road overnight while the troops marched around firing their weapons in the air. It was the same road that American nuns had been murdered on in an earlier incident.

After her release, she continued on to Nicaragua where she lived with a family in San Pedro. She worked as a carpenter on a school project and, before the building was even finished, classes were held for 300 morning and 300 afternoon students. Before the revolution, only the privileged class had educational opportunities; now there is a concerted effort to build new schools.

During her stay in San Pedro, she was in two Contra attacks. In the first attack, on January 25th, four militia members were killed and a thirteen-year-old boy was wounded. The school was attacked and the students fled under fire. The Contras went door to door demanding food and breaking into houses. After 45 minutes of constant fire, the 50 or so Contras were driven back. The next morning the local citizens were milling about and told Christie and her friends about captured weapons and a dead Contra in the town square. The three captured rifles bore the FDN insignia of the Contras.

San Pedro is a conservative community, relatively wealthy and by no means a military target. There were only 23 armed militia present in a town of 3000. It was fairly well insulated from the Somoza regime and the revolution. The sort of community was more likely to support Contra ideology, but after incidents such as this, the citizens increased their resolve to resist Contra interference. As Christie said, "The Contras are their own worst enemies. The San Pedro farmers are not kept out of their fields by the Sandanistas, but by fear of Contra attack."

The second attack came on March 13th at 3:30 AM. There were only 5 of Christie's Brigade members left, so they were all living in one house. Ironically, two reporters were interviewing them about the first attack and became witnesses to the second. During this attack, they were exposed to much heavier fire continuing until daylight. Four Contras were killed that night and 45 more the following day. Six people were kidnapped and several wounded. Four of the kidnap victims escaped later, but the other two are still missing.

Christie was able to view one of the Contra bodies. He wore American boots, a bullet-proof vest and carried a Browning automatic. He had 40,000 Cordobas in his pocket which is a considerable amount of money by Nicaraguan standards. Three different families spoke of a blond, blue-eyed man and woman who came to several homes looking for help. They spoke in English and broken Spanish and the woman had been wounded in the attack.

Heather Randle is a union activist from the Garment Workers local in Massachusetts. She had been in Nicaragua a relatively short time, but made some interesting observations because of a passport problem that made her stay in Tegucigalpa, Honduras for several days. She was able to talk to students, peasants and workers in both countries and to make some comparisons between them. The only Americans she saw in Honduras were U.S. military personnel and reporters; in Nicaragua she saw the usual reporters as well as American tourists, doctors, nurses, teachers, carpenters, workers, clergy and activists. The economic base in Honduras made essential items more expensive. Political activism in Honduras was repressed, and students said they would be arrested if they demonstrated. By contrast, Nicaragua is in a state of emergency, yet seven political opposition parties are allowed to operate openly and large opposition billboards dot the landscape. The people in both countries were friendly, but she felt harassment from the authorities in Honduras.

All three of these students agreed they would be working more intently to make Americans aware of the conditions in Nicaragua when they returned home. They absolutely oppose U.S. intervention in Central America. Heather and Christie visited the U.S. Embassy but found Embassy personnel uninterested in their concerns. The public relations specialist they encountered made sweeping generalizations and provided no documentation when questioned as to names, sources, etc. Victor happened to be hospitalized for four days in Esteli and couldn't help but realize it was the first time the people in Nicaragua could receive adequate health care. There were eleven people on his ward with doctors, nurses and a pharmacy and it didn't cost them a dime. I can't help but wonder when we'll see adequate health care in the U.S.

--Bill Curmano
VVAW Minn

## April 19th Vets' Rally

# AT WAR WITH THE WAR IN CENTRAL AMERICA

VVAW Rally in Chicago on April 19th, bottom left, former Army Captain (and Vietnam vet) Eileen Finnerty addressing the crowd. Photos by M. Nadia

On April 19th, about 250 members and allies of VVAW gathered in the Federal Plaza in Chicago to hear speakers and demonstrate opposition to U.S. involvement in Central America. The rally was both a commemoration and a declaration. It was a commemoration of the proud years Vietnam Veterans Against the War has spent opposing American military aggression in Vietnam and around the world. It was a declaration of undying and unabashed opposition to Reagan's policies in Central America.

April 19th is a special day in the history of VVAW. It was on that date in 1971 that over a thousand Vietnam veterans threw away their medals on the steps of the Capitol in Washington in protest of the war then going on in Vietnam. That event was a shot in the arm to the anti-war movement and established VVAW as an organization with clout.

The first speaker at the April 19th, 1986 rally was Joel Greenberg of the Chicago Chapter. Joel was at Operation Dewey Canyon III--the throwing away of the medals in 1971. He talked about those days. He talked about his participation in Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal) which was a VVAW operation involving a march through New Jersey to Valley Forge. Occurring before Dewey Canyon III, this was the first ever organized protest of veterans against their own government's war while the war was still going on.

Joel didn't only talk of the past. He spoke of the connection between VVAW actions then and the necessity of fighting against the same kind of government policies now as they are being applied to Central America. After Joel spoke other vets took the podium. One heartfelt sentiment that came through was the wish that there be no necessity for an organization called Nicaraguan Veterans Against the War.

One of the speakers had recently arrived from El Salvador where he had been involved in resistance to the fascists supported by the U.S. He told of how the rulers of El Salvador are oppressing his people, and reminded us that U.S. treachery in Central America is not limited to Nicaragua.

A couple of the speakers spoke to an issue that has to be on the minds of more than a few Vietnam vets today. While many of our most vivid thoughts and memories are rooted in events that happened somewhere back around 1969, the mirror tells us that time has moved on. And now many of us have sons approaching military age. A war in Central America will not be a one week adventure like Grenada. These two facts are cause for much concern for Vietnam vet fathers and are all the more reason to now build opposition to what may be war in Central America.

While the rally was held in Chicago, a delegation of VVAW members was returning from Nicaragua. This rally was also an effort to unite friends in Nicaragua and friends here at home. As Reagan escalates his war efforts in Central America, VVAW is escalating peace efforts at home.

(The following letter is from David Truong; railroaded into federal prison as a North Vietnamese spy, he is, as he says in his letter, "the only Vietnamese political prisoner in and of the U.S.")

Dear VVAW:

With the coming 15th anniversary of VVAW's Operation Dewey Canyon III, I very much would like, as the only Vietnamese political prisoner in and of the U.S., to send to you and the brothers who work with you my heartfelt congratulations and solidarity, and, of course, much success for your activities later this month.

Greetings and solidarity to mutual friends--

David Truong
#10033-083
Box 1000
Petersburg, VA
23804

Dear VVAW:

I am sorry that I cannot be with you today to show my opposition to increased military aid to the Contras of Nicaragua.

History has shown us that we need to be cautious about interfering in the internal affairs of other nations. We know too well that a small amount of military aid today can easily lead to troops tomorrow.

Let us urge an extensive dialogue through the Contadora process which will enable the Central American nations to decide their own futures.

My best wishes,

Paul Simon
U.S. Senate,
Illinois

(The following letter was written by Congressman Charles Hayes of the 1st District of Illinois to be read at VVAW's April 19th demonstration.)

Dear Veterans:

As a Member of Congress and a lifelong tradeunionist, I have been aware for many years of the outstanding work of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I commend you for consistently speaking out as our nation's conscience in the true spirit of the American tradition.

As you are well aware, the Reagan Administration is playing a dangerous game of Russian roulette that could cost the lives of many young Americans. I am opposed to the spread of terrorism, as I know you are; however, I do not agree that the Administration's recent actions have done anything to combat it. It appears that the President and his advisors are all too willing to exercise military options rather than to develop strategies to deal with the root causes of our conflicts with governments which we disagree with.

On the other hand, the Administration is all too willing to ignore terrorist acts committed by governments which it supports. No country rivals South Africa in its brutal repression and state-sponsored terrorism against its Black majority. Our government, however, has acted to shield the apartheid regime from world sanctions rather than championing the cause of South Africa's Black population.

Although our allies in Central America oppose U.S. aid to the Contras in Nicaragua on the basis that it is hurting, not helping prospects for peace in the region, it appears that the Administration will stop at nothing, including the possible use of doctored intelligence reports, to bolster its push to aid the rebel group. I have consistently voted against Contra aid and I will continue to do so.

As representative of one of the poorest congressional districts in the U.S. in terms of per capita income, I am especially concerned that our nation does not pursue a policy that may recklessly endanger the lives of the young men and women who serve in our armed forces. One has only to remember the Vietnam War to realize that the lives of young people who are Black, poor and unemployed are at greatest risk when our nation engages in military action.

I am also aware that money to launch military strikes and to support foreign dictators and so-called "anti-communist freedom fighters" comes at the expense of funding for domestic job programs, education, health care and urban redevelopment. How can we tell 14,000 Chicago teenagers that we cannot afford to give them jobs this summer, but that we can afford to give guns, bullets and other weapons to men who rape, pillage and murder for a living? How can we tell hungry schoolchil-

**Please Turn To page 16**

# CIA AGENT-AUTHOR IN FROM THE COLD, TO TELL THE TRUTH

On May 4, 1986, the Milwaukee VVAW chapter had a real treat--we had a guest speaker, Ralph McGehee, a 25-year career man with the CIA, and author of the book Deadly Deceits. Ralph told us how he evolved from a right-wing anti-communist into a severe critic of the CIA during his tenure with the agency.

At first, Ralph believed the CIA existed to save democracy and provide accurate intelligence from which foreign policy would be formulated. He gradually came to the conclusion that the CIA was actually an "anti-intelligence" group, the enforcement arm of the President, whose function was to find or create "intelligence" to support predetermined policies. He shared graphic examples from his experiences in Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, and extrapolated from them to our present policies in the Middle East and Central America, where he has travelled extensively.

Ralph McGehee's enlightenment came to a head in Thailand in 1966-67, where he was assigned to head the intelligence and counterinsurgency operation against the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). He achieved unparalleled success in identifying the real nature of the CPT movement. The official line was that the CPT consisted of a few thousand guerillas who lived in the mountains, coming down to perform acts of terror, stealing supplies, and impressing young men into their ranks. The agency also contended that there was little popular support of the CPT. Through painstaking surveys in one district alone, Ralph was able to determine that popular support was widespread and based on "liberation group ideology." The communists recognized that the government really represented the tiny percentage of wealthy, powerful people at the expense and to the detriment of the masses, the poor rural farmers. The CPT built their base of support literally from the ground up, organizing farmers liberation, women's liberation, and youth liberation groups, promising to throw out the wealthy American lackeys and divide the land and wealth equitably among all the people. All the CPT offered was nationalism and social equality--pretty weak stuff!

Ralph reported his findings to the powers-that-be, expecting a change in policy and the eventual undermining of the CPT. Instead, his programs were terminated, he was sent home, and the official line was still "2000 guerillas, no popular support." Thus began his disillusionment with the CIA. Then came Tet in Vietnam. Ralph became chief CIA advisor to the Vietnamese Special Police, where he found and reported that the South Vietnamese government was infested with communist spies and had no popular support. A review of intelligence reports showed no acknowledgement of liberation groups in Vietnam--that's why Tet was such a surprise to Americans: we had been lied to, genuine intelligence had been suppressed because it didn't support pre-determined policy. Of course, if the CIA had reported that the VC were supported by at least 6 million members of various liberation movements and that we were supporting a government that at best represented 10% of the population, we would have had no choice but to pull out of Vietnam immediately. Instead, we were lied to and it cost us dearly. These lies cost us $900 billion, 2 million Vietnamese dead, 58,000 Americans dead, and God knows how many more poisoned by Agent Orange and traumatized forever by their experiences. How many vets and their families and friends will never be the same again? How many lost all sense of integrity, honor, trust, and love because of the lies we were fed about Vietnam?

We all know about the lies we were told about the Gulf of Tonkin incident, but how many of us know of another fabricated incident in early 1965 that led to the introduction of the first U.S. ground combat forces and Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing of North Vietnam? To support the contention that the North Vietnamese were invading the South, the CIA loaded up a junk with captured weapons, shot the shit out of it, then showed it to reporters as "proof" that the North was invading the South. As a result of this contrived intelligence, LBJ ordered 2 Marine battalions to South Vietnam and began bombing the North.

Now the CIA is attempting to rewrite the history of Vietnam contending we could have won except for lack of support at home. Rambo and his ilk are merely the obvious attempts to change the public's memories and perceptions of the war so the public will support the next one, probably in Nicaragua.

Why, you ask, does the CIA, which is supposed to provide intelligence to help formulate policy, twist, fabricate, or ignore genuine intelligence? The only possible conclusion is that it is not an intelligence agency, but the covert arm of pre-determined policy.

And who benefits from its lies and manipulations? Not the American people, surely not the poor schmuck who pounds the ground and ends up poisoned by his own government and abandoned. The only ones who benefit are the multi-national corporation and the dictators they support against the wishes of their own people. Dictators like the Shah of Iran, Marcos, Somoza and others get fat while their people starve. These "staunch allies" of the U.S. allow the multinationals to exploit the manpower and resource of their countries for their own personal gain, earning us the enmity of their people when they finally throw the bastards out.

Not only do the people of these countries lose, so do the American people: how many American jobs have been lost due to factories moving to Taiwan, Korea and elsewhere where labor is cheap, where union organizers are labelled "communist" and taken care of by death squads. How many American farmers are going under, losing their farms due to slash-and-burn farming of rain forests, etc, fucking up the ecology of the entire world just to make a quick buck.

Now the lies continue in the Middle East and especially in Central America. It's time to wake up, America, and say "Never Again." No More Vietnams!

--John M. Poklar
VVAW Milwaukee

CONTINUED FROM 11

## APRIL 19 RALLY

dren that we will be unable to make certain they have nutrition and immunization programs, but that we will give food and medicine to the Contras?

We should have learned through 20 years of aid to former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos that we cannot stop the spread of communism through support of unpopular regimes. We will only stop it by helping to provide food, education and a decent quality of life for our underprivileged international neighbots, and by supporting rather than stifling, the legitimate liberation struggles of oppressed people throughout the Third World.

/Charles Hayes/
M.C.

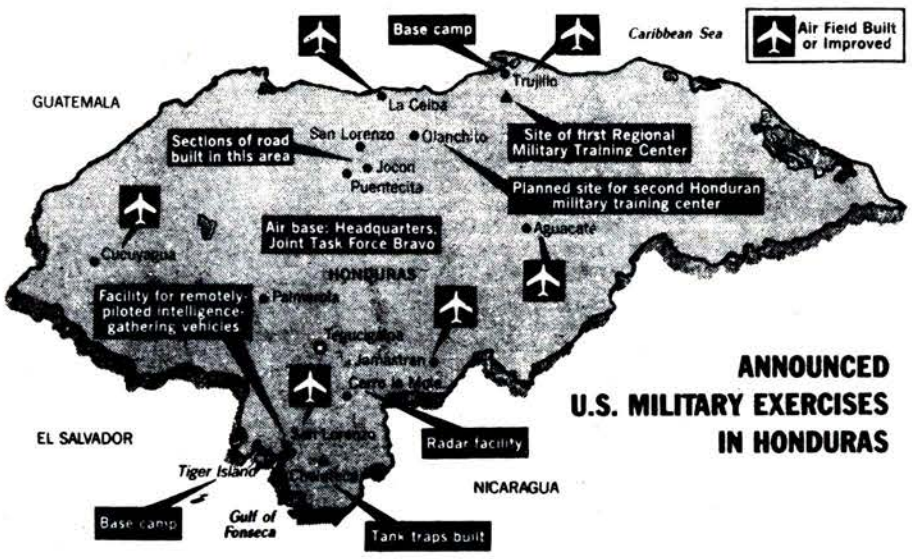
## A CALL FROM TENN.

The Chicago rally received extensive coverage from WGN TV News which goes out across the country on cable. One of the speakers at the rally was Pete Zastrow of the VVAW National Office. On the nightly news WGN showed part of his speech and flashed his name on the screen. Within minutes of that film clip, Pete received a phone call from Memphis, TN. A 'Nam vet had watched the news, called long distance information and then called Pete wanting to know why the hell there was no VVAW Chapter in Memphis. Hopefully, after talking to Pete, the brother is down there getting one organized.

--Bill Shunas
Chicago VVAW

## PRELUDE TO INVASION

# NATIONAL GUARD IN HONDURAS




Hunger is a fact of life in Honduras. Three out of four children in this country suffer some degree of malnutrition. Three out of a hundred have third-degree malnutrition--the skin and bones stage where the body literally feeds on itself and wastes away. After Haiti, Honduras is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In the face of this extraordinary poverty the U.S. is pouring millions of our tax dollars into the militarization of Honduras; into what the Department of Defense calls "temporary" construction including eight C-130-capable airfields with two more under construction, bases, radar stations and fancy field hospitals.

Honduras is also burdened by the influx of tens of thousands of foreigners into the country; refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala, 12,000 to 15,000 contra troops, who, with the help of the U.S. are trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, 750-1,000 permanent U.S. troops stationed at Palmerola Air Force Base, and the constant shuttling of many thousands of U.S. military personnel through military manuevers including 21,000 National Guardsmen since 1982.

Over the last 6 months there has been a growing awareness of the role that the National Guard is playing in the militarization of Honduras. Traditionally, the Guard is thought of as a state militia, called out in times of disasters and to intervene when needed in civil disturbances (for example when the Ohio Guard was called out at Kent State in 1971 and the Arizona Guard which will be used to forcibly relocate the Hopi and Navaho Indians from Big Mountain in July). However, it seems that since the Vietnam War the role of the National Guard has been radically changed. After 1973 when the draft was abolished, the Pentagon adopted the "Total Force Policy" which meant that the National Guard was to be integrated into regular defense strategy. It became necessary to professionalize the National Guard. This emphasis had escalated since Reagan took office. In 1976 the federal contribution to the National Guard was $2 billion; in 1986 it was $8 billion. Two years ago women were purged from many Guard units so they would be "combat ready." The Guard has trained all over the world, but since 1982 most have been sent to Central America and the majority of those to Honduras. According to Representative Mike Burton of Oregon, himself a Vietnam vet, 90% of the U.S. presence in Honduras is National Guard.

***Preparing the invasion option: U.S. soldiers building airstrip in Honduras.***

There are a number of reasons the Guard is being used to contruct a U.S. war base in Honduras. Michigan State Representative Perry Bullard who travelled with the Michigan Guard to see first-hand what the Guard was doing in Honduras reported:

"Sending the Guard to Honduras accomplishes several objectives for the Reagan administration. First, it creates a 'down home--we're in this together'aspect to our involvement on the borders of Nicaragua by having 'citizen soldiers' enter the arena. The reporters traveling with us invariably wrote about the trip from a human interest level, with no detailed analysis of why we are there or of the level of the U.S. presence in the area. Second, the troops transport war materiel to the area which is left for the Honduran army and which finds its way to the Contra forces, bypassing U.S. expenditure limits. And, third, Guard expeditions prepare (literally pave the way) for a rapid deployment of U.S. forces in the event of an invasion of Nicaragua."

The Guard is also the perfect vehicle for a back-door policy in Central America for the Reagan Administration. During peacetime the Guard is answerable only to the governor of its state so there is no need for Congress to approve deployment of the Guard in whatever numbers to Honduras.

The Administration is not authorized to engage in large-scale military construction in Honduras. In June, 1984, the General Accounting Office of Congress found that the Defense Department was funding "exercises" out of the military's "Operations and Maintenance" budget. No more than $200,000 is supposed to be spent on construction in an exercise, and any expenditure over $100,000 needs Congressional approval. To evade these provisions the Administration broke single exercises and projects into smaller units. Now they are also using money earmarked for Guard and Reserve training exercises. By using the National Guard and using descriptions like "goodwill missions" and "training exercises" the readying of a full-scale military infrastructure can continue without alarming U.S. citizens that we are moving closer to an overt U.S. war in the region.

A good example of breaking larger projects into smaller ones so that they can be funded from operations and maintenance funds and get around Congressional approval is the road building project that the Missouri Guard is coordinating with four other states in Northern Honduras. We are being told that this project consists of the construction of a 20-mile road from Jocon to Yoro. This is a "goodwill" mission to help poor Hondurans get to market and to school. What we are not told is that prior to this project (which began in January and will end in June) two other pieces of road had been put into place in separate projects: a piece of road from Olanchito to San Lorenzo followed by a piece from San Lorenzo to Jocon. Now we are building a piece from Jocon to Yoro. There is a military base at San Lorenzo and one at La Ceiba, northwest of Olanchito, and we are helping to construct an airfield and base currently at San Jose del Potrero just southwest of Yoro. It becomes apparent as we put all these pieces together that we are not building roads to help people get to market, but to connect military bases.

Some of the states involved in military construction projects and military manuevers in Honduras since January are Missouri, North Dakota, Arizona, Alabama, and California building the road in Northern Honduras; Arkansas and Oregon have completed military manuevers with the Honduran military near the Nicaraguan border and near contra camps. Wisconsin, Iowa and Colorado are slated to go down this spring and summer. We are still gathering information on other states that have gone or that are going.

The National Guard is being used to set the stage for another Vietnam-style battle between the "good guys" in the West and the "bad guys" in the East, another battleground where communism must be defeated at all costs. The Administration has revamped the old "domino theory." Unless we stop communism in Nicaragua, the rest of the Central American republics, including Mexico, will inevitably fall like dominoes to the Soviets. *Honduras is where* the U.S. is already taking a military stand against the supposed "inevitability." Militarization in Honduras means a focus on "low intensity warfare"--using phase one of Vietnam (the Special Forces and CIA) and phase three (air/electronic) and reducing phase two (direct U.S. regular troops involvement) to a minimum. Thus, militarization includes for the Honduran military: more battalions, more helicopters and planes, more armed militia, Phoenix-style assassination programs, pubiic safety organizations and military intelligence, population destabilization, and support for the contras.

Pledge, Human Rights and Solidarity groups around the country have made this a national issue. Maine and Massachusetts have said no to their Guards going, and some governors like Cuomo of New York and Babbit of Arizona have strongly qualified their permission to train their Guards in Central America. In the face of this grassroots resistance the Adminstration is preparing legislation that would limit the authority of governors to keep National Guard units in their states from being sent to Central America for training. We are having an impact! Let's keep up the resistance!

For information on the National Guard involvement in Honduras, contact St Louis Pledge of Resistance, 438 N. Skinker, St Louis, MO 63130, or call (314) 725-2393.

--Peggy Moore
Pledge of Resistance, St Louis

## MEETING WITH OMAR CABEZAS,

# 'WE COULD HAVE CREATED TERROR BUT WE ARE TOO CIVILIZED'

VVAW delegation with Omar Cabezas.

If you have not read Fire On The Mountain by Omar Cabezas, do so--it's a must. It's a book, the first of three, about the making of a Sandinista. Omar Cabezas was a student organizer and neighborhood organizer in Leon during the late 19-60's and early 1970's. Latin American universities have a history of political agitation which is tolerated by the government because they are universities--not in the mainstream and having little effect on the general population. In Leon they organized against Samoza and dreamed about "going to the mountain" to become guerilla soldiers.

Cabezas, as the book relates, is finally recruited for guerilla bootcamp. Sandinista boot camp in the early 1970's made USMC boot camp look like a picnic. Bugs, mud, sleeping in hammocks in the rain, and only hard corn to eat at times. It was hard core. You must read the book. This man was really funny and down to earth, but serious as a heart attack when it came to fighting for Nicaragua.

One of our planned meetings in our VVAW Nicaragua trip was to be with Tomas Borge, Minister of the Interior. He was busy with a meeting on the House of Representatives vote on April 15th, so his second in command, Omar Cabezas, met with us.

You must remember, this guy is our age--38. He looked *really tired and had a head cold* that would not quit. He started speaking slowly and was very tired. But, the nature of our questions brought out alot more open and relaxed person; in about 45 minutes, he'd gotten his second wind.

We started by talking about how many resources have been stolen from Nicaragua over the last 95 years. Gold, wood, bananas, coffee--U.S. companies and later Somoza got rich and the country received only our pollution (like 90,000 tons of mercury dumped in Lake Managua by Hercules Chemical Co). He said that all companies were welcome to invest in Nicaragua, but 50% of all profit must stay in the country--a good idea! Perhaps something like that should be tried here--maybe 'Nam vets would have jobs.

We talked about Contra aid and U.S. Navy ships off the coasts. The Contra war has killed 13,000 people with many more wounded and homeless. Fifty percent of all the country's spending goes to the war. The U.S. has mined harbors, funded Contra terrorists and now has refused the decision of the World Court in the Hague.

Among Cabezas' statements: "We could have created terror in America like blowing up hospitals and cities, but we are too civilized for that." "We do not hate the people of the U.S., only your government." "We do not want a Communist revolution or a capitalist one, but a Sandinista one."

The U.S. says there is only black and white, no grey. Because of U.S. TV, people in your country do not know the truth.

"We say no arms or bases in Central America. We understand that the U.S. considers Central America in its sphere of influence. We will not allow foreign bases in our country because that would give the U.S. an excuse to invade us. The U.S. responds to us by building bases in Honduras as close as 18 kilometers from our borders. We are willing to sign the treaty resulting from the Contadora Peace process in June of 86, but we feel that the U.S. will not and wants only to invade us."

How will we stop the invasion? "We have no Navy, only 3 planes in our Air Force, but we have the people of Nicaragua. We already passed out 300,000 AK-47's and are passing out another 100,000 this year. You can take the airport at our capital of Managua, but you will suffer 15,000 casualties. We will fight you as long as it takes to be free. General Sandino started 50 years ago but the people finally won. In order to truly beat us you would have to use atomic weapons."

"Your President is redefining America's values with his policies. All it brings the American people is a loss of respect from other nations in Latin America."

As we listened to him speak 1000's of people were marching in the street protesting the passage of $27 million in aid to the Contras. We could hear them through the windows.

Before opening up to questions, Cabezas said, "Go out on the streets and talk to the people--they will tell you how they feel."

"We are proud of your work in the U.S. Little groups and big groups all have a part to play. Each person you win over or each fact you bring to the people is a light. You add another light, then another, another, another...Finally you have the light of the sun shining."

I asked him how many Contras were ex-National Guard?

He answered that only 20% of the Contra forces are peasants, the rest are ex-National Guard or Somozistas. He said they captured 1500 ex guards and turned them over to the Red Cross. This was a bad mistake because most went back to fight with the Contras. He also said without U.S. aid, the Contras would not fight for more than a year.

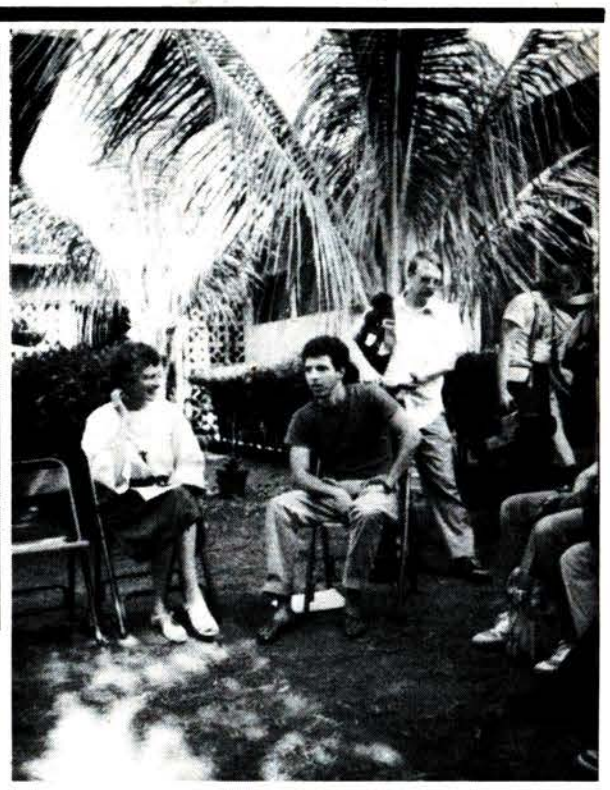
"We will not negotiate with the Contras, only with the head Contra, Ronald Reagan." He continued to talk about how foolish it is to say that Nicaragua will invade the U.S. "Our enemies are U.S. big business, not the U.S. people. We go to great lengths to tell our people who the enemy is. We don't hate the U.S. people."

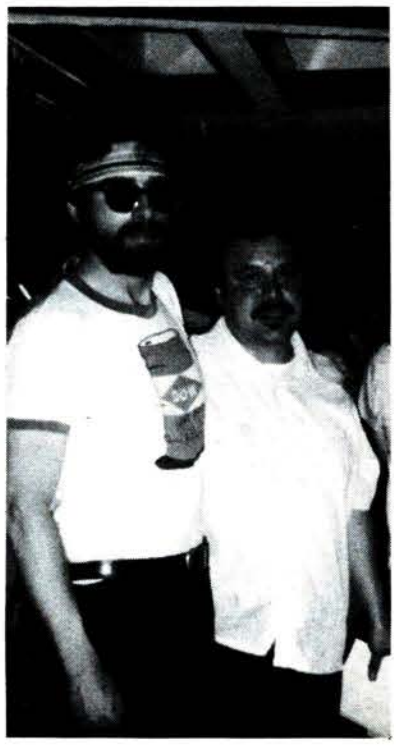
He talked about his trip to the U.S.A. He had his wallet stolen in New York City, but still likes the U.S. people. He asked us if we had had anything stolen? We said no.

Some one in our group asked him if they had a problem with post traumatic stress. He answered that some people always have problems with war and killing, but our problems are not the same as those of Vietnam vets, he said. "We respect our veterans as heroes, find them jobs, pay them to finish school and set up veterans' organizations. The only way to deal with their problems is with love, respect and attention. The main difference is that we understand what we are fighting for."

I personally felt this meeting with Omar Cabezas was the highlight of the trip. He kept getting notes to leave but would come back again and again. I urge all members of VVAW to read his book. If Ronald Reagan only understood the determination of the Nicaraguan's to be free, he wouldn't be so quick to waste another generation of America's armed forces. "Come on people, Let's stop the War Now!"

--John Lindquist
VVAW National Office





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INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY OF THE SANDINISTA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT



*Vietnam veterans*

# Speaking from experience

"Let this be the last American blood shed on Nicaraguan soil." With those words, the three Vietnam War veterans, their raised hands joined, slowly knelt to the ground and rubbed their pricked and bleeding fingers into the dusty Managua street in front of the U.S. embassy.

The other U.S. citizens gathered in front of the enormous, fenced-in embassy grounds for their weekly Thursday morning vigil, were visibly moved and broke into enthusiastic applause. The dramatic gesture of the three men and the words that had preceded it, recited in English and Spanish, were the type of tactics that the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) learned to use effectively in the late 1960's as a way to "bring the war home."

And indeed, the visit by 13 members of that organization was timed to coincide with the 15th anniversary of one of its most significant early actions: Duey Canyon III. Duey Canyons I and II had been operations against Laos, first by the U.S. military in 1969 and later by the South Vietnamese army in 1971. So the veterans group decided to hold a five-day limited incursion of Washington, D.C., also in 1971. On the last day of that action, some 1,500 veterans threw their medals on the Capitol steps. "We left a pile some three feet high and six feet across," says John Lindquist, former U.S. Marine who, like most of the other veterans, served a 13 month tour of duty in Vietnam. "Guys were pulling off their artifical arms, returning their medals and discharge papers, breaking their canes."

Those veterans were, in part, expressing their rage over what Lindquist described as a feeling "that we had been used and then thrown away." However, the U.S. veterans found a different mood in the Nicaraguan military hospitals and rehabilitation centers they visited. "These people are heroes, we were not," says Bill Curmano, a former U.S. paratrooper.

Since its founding in 1967 VVAW has had a total of 75,000 members, 15,000 of whom served during the height of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

DEJA VU

"And now it's starting all over again," says Lindquist. The misinformation churned out by the current administration is one of the greatest similarities the group members see between Vietnam and Nicaragua. They explained that their most important task, as during the Vietnam War era, is to let the U.S. people know what is really happening. "We came to Nicaragua to talk to the people and government officials, see the country, and put it together in a film we can take to schools and neighborhoods. That's probably the only way information will get out," said Curmano.

"The contras are not freedom fighters," emphasized Lindquist, refuting one of the Reagan administration's more obvious lies. "If it wasn't for our funding, they would have no support; they would dry up and blow away."

The U.S. people's unfamiliarity with the history of Third World nations is another factor that the government exploited on both occasions to whip up anti-communist fervor in the United States.

"I volunteered to go into the Marine Corps to kill Communists," says Lindquist. "I was brought up during the McCarthy era, with John Wayne movies, and now the kids have Rambo. Nobody knew the history of Vietnam and French involvement; now nobody knows that the U.S. Marine Corps invaded Nicaragua three times and that we put Somoza in power."

Basically, the message that most of the veterans would like to get across to the U.S. people is that the Nicaraguan people want to decide their own destiny. "I've never lived in a communist country, but I know that they violate rights in those countries. In Nicaragua, people just want to make their own decisions and their own mistakes without anyone telling them what to do. If this country is communist, then I wouldn't mind living in a communist country," remarked Manuel Martínez.

For Clarence Fitch, a Black American and former Marine Corps sergeant, U.S. foreign policy is racist and has traditionally oppressed people in the Third World. Fitch points out that during the Vietnam War 40 percent of the combat deaths were Blacks. In any direct U.S. intervention of Nicaragua, he adds, the majority of those fighting will be Blacks and Latinos, because they are joining the U.S. army now due to the dim economic prospects for minorities. Fitch's VVAW chapter routinely visits schools in New York and New Jersey to do "counterrecruiting" among the students and keep them from volunteering.

The war veterans also reiterated a fact which, according to opinion polls, has not been lost on the U.S. people. "We shouldn't aid the contras and we shouldn't invade Nicaragua, because they will fight us just like the Vietnamese. If they run out of weapons, they'll fight us with sticks. They are determined; I don't want to see American casualties, or the hurt and killing done to Nicaraguans," concluded John Lindquist.

However, the veterans are optimistic about what they perceive as an important difference between Vietnam and Nicaragua: U.S. public opinion. "We're not saying that this period is not dangerous, because it is and people are dying, but there is no comparison with the amount of war fever that existed during Vietnam," says Curmano. Lindquist agrees: "It wasn't until 1969 that people started to protest the Vietnam War, and by then over 40,000 U.S. citizens had died."

Like the other veterans, Fitch feels that the U.S. population will not allow another Vietnam. "If Reagan had his way, the U.S. Marines would be counting votes in Managua, just like they did over half a century ago. He is doing everything to start a war, but the American people will not give him the means; they will take to the streets first." ■

# RECOLLECTIONS

THE VETERAN welcomes contributions to "Recollections"-stories or poems describing the experience of the military, of war or of Vietnam.

# FINDING JOE'S NAME ON THE WALL

This is the story about how a man died. But, more than that, it is a story about why a man died.

It's one of those stories that even my wife didn't hear until last year when we traveled to DC to see the Wall. She understood my wanting to see the Wall, but when I started looking for one particular name, she got very quiet. I knew it was time to tell her this story.

When I got to Vietnam in early December of 1969, I had only been in the Army since mid-June, with 60 days of that time on leave. So I arrived, young and superbly trained, and knew that in-country orientation sessions were only preludes to work details. By skipping out on them I found myself riding down a road (as "shotgun") holding an M-16 which I knew nothing about. That was when the truck driver told me we were entering the stretch of road they called "ambush alley."

I was assigned to one of the two dump truck companies in the country, and soon the platoon sergeant had assigned me to my own dump truck. But not until I had promised to return it in the same condition I got it in. So, I became the pilot of a five-ton dump truck, about which I knew only slightly more than I knew about my M-16 (they did make sure I knew how to shift).

This particular truck (DT 40) was the only diesel I saw in the Army with the exhaust low near the rear wheels. From that exhaust came a constant, thick, oily, black cloud that got worse when I accelerated. The engine also had a deficiency which nobody ever figured out--it had no power. It would go, but it took a long time to get there.

After I had been in-country for six or seven months I hadn't seen much combat, but then why should the enemy bother with a dump truck company? We were no threat to them (we weren't actively looking for them), we were building roads which they used as much as we did, we supported the local economy, and

we tore up those trucks faster than they ever could have hoped to match.

Being in a truck I was mobile so I probably got around more than a grunt. But I was still on the ground so I feel I actually saw more things than someone in the air. I started asking myself questions about what we were doing, and if it was accomplishing anything. I didn't come up with any answers but I kept seeing all the waste. I went from being a fair trooper to being a malcontent.

In a series of disciplinary actions I was demoted to E-1 (the rank I came back to the States with) and my military driver's license was taken away. I was relegated to fixing flat tires.

DT 40 was still in much the same shape as when I got it. The engine had been rebuilt, and I had talked to mechanics all the way to the batallion level, but the truck still emitted that distinctive smoke screen, and it was still a dog. I had even tried to junk it, but that would have "jeopardized our mission." It was assigned to another member of my squad--I'll call him Joe.

I told Joe of the problems with the truck and what I had tried to do to rectify them. He would just do the best he could, he said.

Time passed, we moved a number of times, our platoon was TDY living in a small compound called Hot Rocks at the top of the pass between Na Trang and Ban Me Thout.

We were mainly hauling asphault toward Ban Me Thout but occasionally would bring supplies up the pass from Na Trang. The platoon always traveled in convoy, and since it was the slowest, DT 40 (and Joe) was always the lead truck.

And Joe was the lead driver the day he died. The platoon was hauling concrete blocks up the pass. I had been left in the compound to do my thing, so I never saw the rocket that punched a fist-sized hole through the heavy metal of the dump box right behind Joe's head.

We didn't know until the next day about the piece of shrapnel that passed above his flak jacket and below his steel pot and penetrated into his brain. The doctors couldn't do a thing for him.

I contend to this day that the truck should not have been on the road. It was hit by a rocket notorious for innaccuracy while moving. If it had been able to go one mile an hour faster perhaps the hit wouldn't have been fatal.

At his memorial service the chaplain talked about how Joe was a good soldier, and how he died in a good cause. I was one of the few who knew that his death was just another example of the rampant waste that surrounded us. Though the enemy pulled the trigger, Joe was killed by an army system that put mission before men.

As I tried to explain all these things to my wife and myself, she began to understand more about the war and why I was reluctant to talk about it. And she understood why I had to find Joe's name on the Wall. She knew that if I had been a better soldier, kept my mouth shut, and behaved myself, that space on the Wall could be holding my name.

John Zutz
Milwaukee

## New Music for America

"Jim Walktendonk is an American voice, with a message from an all-too-silent generation. He deserves to be heard and I urge you to listen." --Tom Paxton

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....He speaks for a generation of Americans who were sent to fight in a war that is still not over for them...or for us." --George Vukelich, poet, author, WWII vet

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# STILL ROBBING INDIAN LAND

All of us remember from school days the story of how the Dutch settlers purchased Manhattan Island for $24 from the native inhabitants. It was one of the biggest real estate swindles in history!

Three centuries later most of us have changed our consciousness about the American Indians. We realize that our government has historically treated them with indignity and deceit, violating nearly all our treaties soon after we signed them.

All that's past, right?... Wrong! Our Congress--which represents you and me--is even today in the midst of another land grab from native Americans, this time from the Hopi and Navajo tribes of Arizona.

We can stop this tragedy; if we act quickly. Here's a summary of the facts and what we *can do* about the situation:

*Public Law 93-531, passed in 1974, requires the Navajo to be forcibly removed from the Big Mountain area of Arizona, in what is now known as the joint Use Area (JUA) of the Hopi and Navajo land. The purpose of this removal is to ameliorate so-called "tribal warfare."

Kenji Kawano/Navajo Times

Navajo women have been in the forefront of fighting relocation.

*The Navajo, who are nomadic shepherds, and the Hopi, who are village-dwelling farmers, have shared this area (JUA) for at least 100 years in peace.

*The only serious conflict between the two tribes exists between their so-called "tribal councils." These tribal councils were created by the U.S. government to regulate the native Americans. (The first "tribal council" was appointed by

At the urging of major business interests, the U.S. government is continuing a centuries-old campaign to steal Indian land. At Big Mountain, Arizona, the government plans to forcibly remove 14,000 Navaho and Hopi people from land on which they have lived for centuries--so that coal and uranium companies can build strip mines. The corporations will have the "gift" of stolen Indian land; the U.S. taxpayers will be left with a tax bill for over a billion dollars. the Department of the Interior in 1923--at the request of Standard Oil--to authorize drilling leases.) No more than 15% of the people turn out to vote for these councils; most natives do not recognize the legitimacy of white-sponsored native councils that claim the ability to sell or lease ancestral lands.

Thomas Banyacya of the Hopi traditional council of elders says, "There is no land dispute between the Navajo and the Hopi. The traditional people never recognized the tribal councils. It is the tribal councils and the big energy companies and the U.S. government who are in dispute against the Navajos and the Hopis. The Great Spirit didn't want the land dug up to create nublear weapons...I call upon the U.S. and the so-called tribal councils to refrain from invading Big Mountain and allow the traditional people to remain in their homes."

*Relocation was concocted to benefit big mining interests; there are enormous coal and uranium deposits on tribal lands, which will be available to leasing by the "tribal councils" once the lands are vacated.

*Among the tiny minority of natives pushing for relocation are several Hopi millionaire businessmen, who were educated in white schools, are Mormon converts, and have abandoned their ancestral spiritual traditions (the Mormon scriptures teach that all dark races are accursed).

*Relocation for the Navajo means that people who once lived on the land in complete self-sufficiency are moved to city suburbs. Often they speak no English, can't find work, are forced to go on welfare, and even lose their homes to unscrupulous loan sharks. Their children are prey to alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide. The older ones literally die of broken hearts.

*The move, originally estimated to involve 3,300 people, and to cost $37 million, will actually involve 10,000-15,000 people and will cost a total of $1.5-2 billion before it is over.

For more information, write the Big Mountain Legal Offense/Defense Committee and ask to be on their mailing list. Include *your phone number for their emergency* phone campaign. If you can send a much-needed donation. The address is: Big Mountain Legal Defense/Offense Committee, 2501 N. 4th St, Suite 18-19, Flagstaff, AZ 86001. (602) 774-5233.

# STAR WARS=STAR DEATH

The former director of what became known in 1983 as Star Wars research appeared in Milwaukee in late April to vent his opposition to Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) proposal.

LTC Robert Bowman served as Director of Advanced Space Programs Development for the Air Force from 1974 through 1978. As such he oversaw research and evaluation of proposed anti-satellite and anti-ballistic missile weapons, lasers, directed energy weapons, surveillance satellites and advanced space vehicle subsystems: the whole ball of wax that Reagan is proposed to stick together into a shield against ballistic missiles. Following his distinguished 22 year Air Force career (he flew over a hundred combat missions in Vietnam) Dr Bowman managed advanced space programs for General Dynamics and was a vice president of the Space Communications Company. He currently heads the Institute of Space and Security Studies which condemns Star Wars proposals as foolish, impractical and extremely dangerous.

Bowman entitled his talk "Star Wars: Not Just a Waste of Money." He analyzed and ridiculed the idea that we could ever develop a foolproof defense against ballistic missiles, even if the U.S. invested trillions of dollars in the process. Like many other critics, he pointed out that the Russians would have a far easier and less expensive task screwing up such a complex and unproven system than the U.S. would have constructing it. Bowman estimated that the Russians would have a cost advantage of 1000 to 1 in overcoming SDI through countermeasures. For example, the mirrors that would have to be orbited to bounce laser beams around the globe in order to zap missiles could easily be fouled by dust or oil droplets in an intersecting orbit.

Bowman emphasized, however, that the inadequacy of Star Wars as a defensive system is simply not the point. Although Star Wars is advertised as a defensive anti-missile system with the unique ability to destroy during the vulnerable boost phase, when missiles are slow and visible and have not yet deployed their payloads into a cloud of warheads and decoys, it could only be really effective if it were employed in the "pre-boost phase" when the missiles are still in their silos. In orther words, Star Wars is meant to be used as a first-strike offensive weapon.

"The only believable use of Star Wars would be in the hands of an aggressor," said Bowman. Star Wars could be used, he said, to seize military control of space and then threaten any target on earth with instant incineration by directed energy weapons. "It has been our policy for decades," he said, "to go to war to prevent the Russians from deploying such weapons in space and doubtless the Russians have the same policy." Deployment of Star Wars he asserted, probably guarantees nuclear war. The only hope, according to Bowman, is to ensure that nobody gets a Star Wars system.

"To this day the military has never recommended a Star Wars system," said Bowman. The problem, he said, is that "the Reagan administration is run by the Heritage Foundation" and ideological hardliners like Richard Perle, formerly of the Committee for a Present Danger and now Assistant Secretary of Defense.

While expressing tremendous concern over the dangerous course pursued by the Reagan administration, Bowman felt that none of Reagan's potential successors, including the Republicans, were as sold on the idea or as ignorant of its risks. He expressed his hope that public pressure on Congress will cause it "to grab the purse strings to preserve the Anti-Gallistic Missile Treaty, the bedrock of the arms control process" and halt Star Wars.

Bowman's talk provided the rare opportunity to hear an eminently qualified expert speak on the most important question of all: human survival. It was sponsored by a broad range of peace and public affairs groups as well as the UWM Physics Department and Faculty and was attended by several hundred people. It was, however, universally ignored by the mainstream Milwaukee media.

--Chris Deisinger

**ADVERTISEMENT**

*"I believe that if we had and would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-soaked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own . . . and if unfortunately their revolution must be of the violent type because the 'haves' refuse to share with the 'have-nots' by any peaceful method, at least what they get will be their own, and not the American style, which they don't want and above all don't want crammed down their throats by Americans."*

*General David M. Shoup, Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps (1960-1963), and winner of Congressional Medal of Honor for World War II heroism: May 14, 1966.*

**Let the former Marine** Corps Commandant, General David M. Shoup, do the talking! Both a 22x34" poster (#38p) and a pamphlet debunking Reagan's statements on Nicaragua. Folded to 8x11" on white paper. Produced by Nicaragua Peace Project of Syracuse. By mail $1.50, 5/$6.50, 50/$18, 100/$25.
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sun tzu

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# FIGHTING THE DRAFT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Gavin Evans, South African draft resister.

The state of emergency in South Africa has resulted in increased military occupation in the country's Black townships.

Unlike the civilian police force, the South African Defense Force does not include Blacks. The government needs every available white male for compulsory military service. Increasing numbers of young men are refusing to serve in the SADF on moral, religious and political grounds. Of the 30,000 or so high school graduates drafted in January of 1985, 7,500 did not report for duty. This was a fourfold jump from the 1984 figure of 1,589. The only grounds on which alternative service to the military is made available are those of universal religious pacifism. This definition excludes most potential objectors. Provision is not made for those objecting to military service on religious grounds in terms of the just war theory or on moral and political grounds. The present sentence for such objectors is a mandatory six-year term in civilian prison. Most youths face a choice of a life in exile or six years in prison.

a number o groups in South Africa came together to establish the "End Conscription Campaign"

In 1984, after many efforts, various groups in South Africa came together to establish the "End Conscription Campaign." In addition to opposition to conscription, the "End Conscription Committees" around the country (52 in all) have set themselves a number of tasks.

First, the ECC's are attempting to create a coherent and educated voice of opposition to the role of the military and to conscrition.

Second, the ECC's provide a a supportive and stimulating environment for their member organizations to take up their opposition. And, third, the ECC's endeavor to propogate non-racialism and to build support for the non-racial organizations representing the majority of South Africa's people in order to work toward the goal of a just peace in South Africa.

In May the New York peace community was privileged to hear one of the leaders of the End Conscription Campaign.

Gavin Evans, a 26-year-old white South African who will be eligible for the draft after he completes one semester of law school, has already told the government of South Africa that he will not sign up. In South Africa, in order to maintain apartheid, the government depends on all the whites in the country to stand together. But bit by bit that has begun to change. Businessmen, churchmen and students have begun to resist. Now the young men which the government must have for its military have begun to say, "Hell No, We Won't Go!"

Members of VVAW from NY/NJ went to one of the presentations by Mr Evans in the New York City area. We presented him a VVAW button and literature from our organization. He was grateful for our support and could understand the special identification we feel with the anti-military, anti-racist struggle.

--Clarence Fitch
NY/NJ VVAW

**Don't Miss It!**
**NATIONAL VVAW MEETING**
**See Page 1 !**

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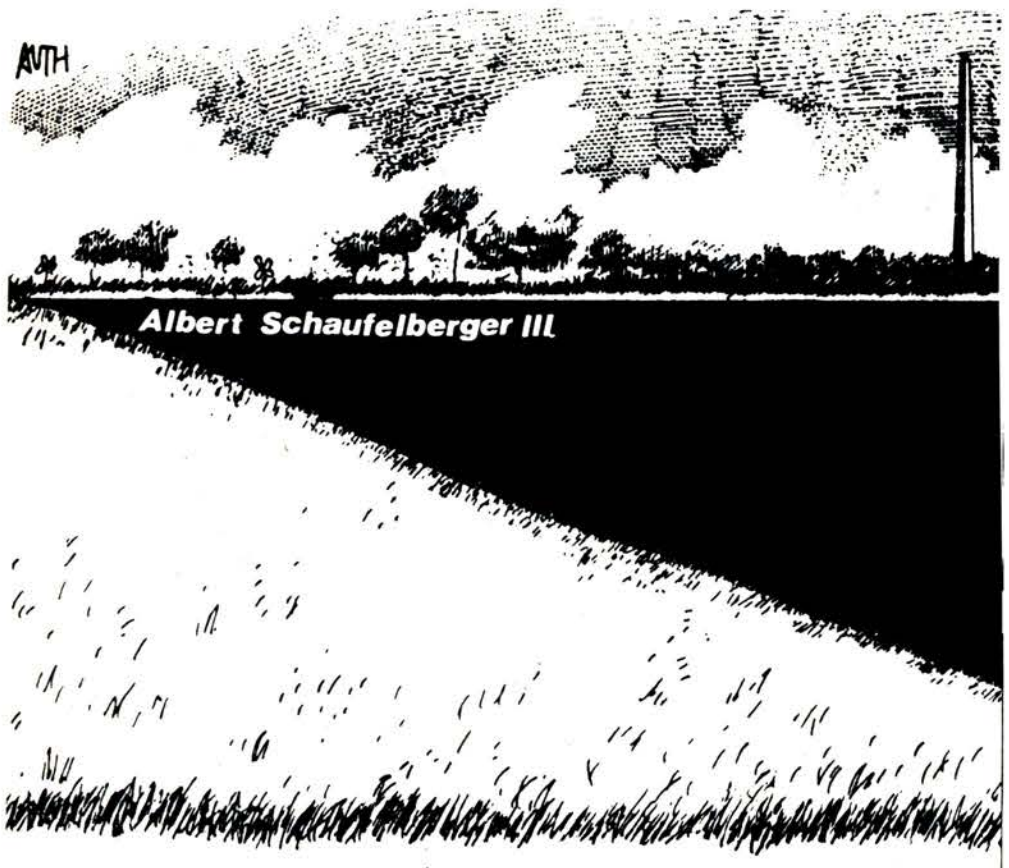
# MEDAL OF HONOR RETURNED




EL SALVADOR MEMORIAL - STEP ONE

is devoid of creative, non-violent conflict resolution, known as peaceful negotiation. The art of diplomacy has given way to the artless use of brute force exercised judiciously on the weak and dependent. While the Latin American neighbors of Nicaragua patiently struggle in protracted non-violent dialogue in a process known as Contadora, the U.S. pursues a "gunboat" policy of military aid to the Contras.

"My dear fellow Americans, we have become a nationa that arrogates to itself the right to impose its way of life on any country too weak to defend its independence. Nicaragua's fault is trying to break the pattern of Central American dependence on the U.S.

'She no longer wants to be a patch of grass in the mythical North American "backyard."

"Lest anyone conclude that I have been duped by a slick Sandinista propaganda program, I want to say that I am not unaware of the human rights abuses of the Sandinista government. They exist. But they pale in comparison with the atrocities committed by the Contras or the U.S. backed military in El Salvador.

"Let's take one of the State Department's favorite complaints against the Sandinistas, persecution of the Church. In Nicaragua, the Catholic Church radio has been silenced, ten to fifteen priensts have been expelled and a Cardinal has been censured.

'In El Salvador, an Archbishop has been murdered, his assassin still at large. Four American church women have been brutally raped and murdered. Hundreds of priests, nuns, and lay catechists have been killed or disappeared.

'Now why is our State Department so silent about persecution of the Church in El Salvador and so vocal about persecution of the Church in Nicaragua?

"I am not a devotee of the Nicaraguan government. I don't have to be. I don't pay taxes in Nicaragua. I am, however, an advocate of the U.S. government. I am responsible for what it does in the name of America. If I am to be a true patriot, that is, a person who loves this country even when it's wrong, I must monitor and criticize its policies. It is my duty and my right.

"On the basis of 18 months of intense study of the history and nature of the problems in Central America, which includes two trips in the last year, I conclude that U.S. policy toward Nicaragua and El Salvador is grossly immoral, legally questionable, and highly irrational.

U.S. involvement in Central America is Vietnam all over again. Our advisors are there, our weapons are there. our logistical support is there, our money may soon be there in super abundance. Waiting in the wings for a cue from the President are U.S. combat troops.

"The questions is no longer 'Will Central America become another Vietnam?' Central America is another Vietnam and the time to demonstrate against it is now, not only to prevent the future loss of young American lives, but to stop the current killing of Nicaraguan and Salvadoran innocents.

"I pledge to do everything in my power to foster non-violent resistence to current U.S. policy in Central America. My conscience demands nothing less.

"At the conclusion of this press conference my Medal of Honor will be placed in an envelope along with the statement I have just made and laid before the Vietnam Memorial Wall. The label on the envelope reads:

This envelope contains the Congressional Medal of Honor of the United States of America, awarded November 19, 1968 to Charles J. Liteky for valor in Vietnam. The medal was renounced on July 29, 1986 in protest of U.S. intervention in Central America, seen by the former holder of this medal as another Vietnam.

My God!!!
In spite of the names etched
On this Wall, we are doing it
again.
"When will we ever learn?"
God forgive us
again.

# "FOR A BROTHER"

I watched you as we gathered
I saw the pain begin,
Your guarded stance
With shield and lance
A soldier still within.

You wouldn't go in Arlington,
You viewed it from the gate,
It was there you knew
The Marshalls gathered
To seal Dewey Canyon's fate.

Vietnam vets had gathered
To reflect and demonstrate,
You chose to lead
Like Back in 'Nam
And how you felt your hate.

You longed to walk among the stones
That haunt you in your sleep,
To kneel in the grass of Arlington
To pause with what war reaps.

To be among your comrades,
To say a secret prayer,
I saw you there that morning,
You wore a thousand-yard stare.

The years have seen some changes
Since Dewey Canyon III
You've mellowed some, but most
of all,

It's hate you have set free.

The war remains on battlegrounds
From here to Camh Ran Bay.
And Vietnam Veterans Against the
War,

Will always be there to say:

No More War, Upon this earth,
No Contra aid supplied,
To question as is needed,
To find the hidden lie.
To question as is needed,
Until the day we die.

--Jim Wachtendonk
VVAW Madison

**THE VETERAN welcomes letters, comments and criticisms. Please write. Also, send along any poetry, drawings, photos or stories you would like to see in the paper.**

of Central Americans of all ages: men, women, children, vulnerable innocents of the conflict.

"I first became aware of atrocities funded by the American tax dollar by the victims of these atrocities: refugees from El Salvador and poor peasants in Nicaragua.

"Their incredible stories of cruelty started me on a search for truth that has led me through book after book and report after report on the conditions of poverty and oppression in Central America and my government's response to these conditions.

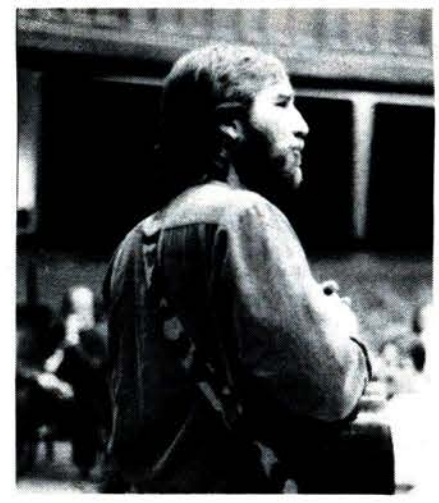
"The U.S. government has responded to the needs of oppressed people in El Salvador by supporting their oppressors, wealthy elites who control the lives of the poor through brutal military force.

"In Nicaragua, the U.S. government response to the oppressed' is the creation, direction, and support of a counterrevolutionary guerrilla army known as the Contras. Winds of controversy whirl around the Contras over the question of human rights abuses. In one of his speeches to the American people, President Reagan referred to Contra atrocities as "much ado about nothing." In his most recent speech on aid to the Contras, the President acknowledged the atrocities of the Contras and assured us that Contra human rights abuses would be corrected under U.S. direction, much the same as we have helped the Salvadoran army become respectful of human rights. This does not speak well for the future of the Nicaraguan poor. This makes me wonder if the President has read the human rights abuse record of the Salvadoran army for the year of 1985.

"In a word, the policy of our government in Central America is premarily militaristic. It

Continued from Page 24

## BOONEYTUNES ....



you are able to make many other people feel as I do.

Before I close I want you to know that because of you I have decided that I truly could never morally work for any company involved with any chemicals or any other product to be used exclusively for war purposes. I am a chemistry major and I graduate in December. Whether there's money in it or not, I want to put my knowledge to work in an organization which helps to solve some of today's environmental problems (acid rain, toxic waste).

Thanks again for your time on Wed evening and for your time now.

God Bless you and
your family--
Sincerely,
Paul Schmek

PPS: Joe was right. Entertainment with guidance. A sense of truth with personal history does sink in sometimes.

That's all for now--

Jim Wachtendonk

# Booneytunes Revue

One evening, while sleeping, I dreamed I was writing a column for THE VETERAN about music and musicians. I started with the words "Boonie Toons" and just wrote until I woke up. The next day I tried to list all the musical events I'd been at. Benefits, concerts, national actions and demonstrations, Veterans' Day ceremonies--all brought on recollections others might like to get in on. All or most included a musician with a song. It's the songmakers we'll learn about in "Boonie Toons." I guess dreams do come true.

(In prose we've had Hearts and Minds, First Casualty Press, and the New Soldier. Alongside, veterans were writing songs; the world has heard John Prine's "Sam Stone," Bill Holmes "Quantricity," Jimmy Hendrix's legendary "Star Spangled Banner," Harry Chapin's "Shooting Star," and Joe McDonald's "Fixin' to Die Rag"--and these are just a few. In "Boonie Toons" we'll look at music, musicians and gigs, past and upcoming. Reviews of vet performers as well as their roots will be included in each column. If you've got someone in mind who belongs in the "Boonie Toons" review, write me c/o "Boonie Toons," P.O.Box 3472, Madison, WI 53704. I'll write it up. Great; now for the first installment of "Boonie Toons.")

Country Joe McDonald is famous for his antiwar stance in the '60's. He is also a Vietnam era Navy veteran. Joe, a self-espoused lifer in the peace movement has continued to write and perform thought-provoking music for the past 15 years.

It was in San Fransisco at the Jabberwock Music Club where it all started for Joe. While Steve Miller, The Jefferson Airplane and The Grateful Dead were being called the "San Francisco Sound," Country Joe and the Fish were being compared with the Fugs as political bands. Joe recalls, "I always thought it was the fault of the underground that they never really defined to us what we were to them. They seemed to do that pretty well with other bands--you know, they pretty well let them know where they're at. But they never did that to us."

In the '80's Joe believes some things are the same but he thinks things are much closer than before. A good example would be his "Fixin' to Die Rag." He sang that song at Woodstock and it has followed him around the world, sometimes to his dismay. Some of the press implied that the lyrics leaned against Vietnam veterans. For instance,

> "Well, its one, two,three
> what are we fightin' for,
> Don't ask me I don't give
> a damn,
> Next stop is Vietnam.
> And it's five, six, seven
> Open up your pearly gate,
> Well there ain't no time
> to wonder why,
> Whopee, we're all gonna
> die.

Joe wrote that song before Tet of 1968. The song was misunderstood just like Vietnam veterans were misunderstood in 1968. Joe says, "I feel much of my music identifies with Vietnam vets. As they become more digestable, so does my music. So few people did political music that dealt with the military, I got labeled as a vet with a bad attitude." Well, Joe, there's quite a few of us with that "attitude" and that's what makes your music so tasty.

Time has mellowed Joe but his sights are still on the military. He came to grips with his military service in 1981. Now when he performs he lets people know he is a vet and that he helps other veterans come to grips with their past.

**COUNTRY JOE McDONALD**

There are three generations of Joe McDonald fans out there. This time around his message is clear. He reminds the peace movement not to push vets out. They should reach out to them. He successfully mixes entertainment with guidance. Joe's stand against militarism and the need for a planet in balance with nature are subjects of many of his tunes. His blend of lyrics warms the soul as it helps heal old wounds. His lyrics are some of the best. He weaves the song with a storyteller's ease. He likes science fiction themes as well. "Picks and Lazers," "Darin' Dan, the Rocket Man," and "You Could Be A Clone of Yourself" are fun to listen to.

Joe as a Tape Talk cassette magazine format you might like. Issue #4 deals with Vietnam vet music. On it you'll find a great selection of tunes: Side A--"Quang Tri City," "Sergeant Willy," "Agent Orange Song," "Hurting More," "The Girl Next Door," and "Luang Probang." Side B is women's music introduced by Holly Near. Singers are Sweet Honey on the Rock, Cris Williamson, Meg Christian, Linda Tillary Ferron, and Holly Near.

If you are interested in any of Joe's albums, you can order through Boonie Toons, Box 3472, Madison, WI 53704.

Check out Joe McDonald at your local music estabulary and plug into the sound that gets the highest praise from this struggling musician. You'll enjoy--I promise you.

## ENTERTAINMENT WITH GUIDANCE

In the lecture hall, there were over 150 students taking in a lecture on Vietnam history. Denny, Ron and I were covering the discussion this night. Last year was VVAW's first year participating. When the call came in from the teacher no one was available in the chapter, except me, and I was stressing out. I didn't think I could do it alone. But I packed up my guitar and armed myself with music and copies of THE VETERAN, and set out expecting a class of about 30 or so.

The lecture pit was packed with over 200 students. In the front two rows were ROTC Marine Corp troops just back from basic. Great!! But to my surprise the class was wide-eyed and eager to learn more about 'Nam through my recollections and music. It wasn't long before I sensed the interest in the room. It went well, all my copies of THE VETERAN vanished and I left with a spring in my step.

Now, one year later, three discussion groups had already been covered, and tonight all the groups are meeting in a larger lecture hall for the music presentation. Following the break I went up on the podium and began by telling the students a little about myself and and my tour in 'Nam. I was pleased to find out many of the students had been at VVAW's Veteran's Day Concert in 1985, so I opened with Country Joe's "Vietnam Veteran Still Alive." I could tell by the interest on their faces that the music had an effect on them. Before I knew it 45 minutes had gone by. We had mixed the music with recollections and questions from the students and it had been fun, informative and an important void had been filled. The more schools VVAW visits the more I'm convinced that's where we belong. Tonight "Boonie Toons" went over really big.

PS: This letter came for me today and I'd like to share it with you.

"Dear Mr Wachtendonk,

I have very little idea of what I want to say but for some reason I feel a tremendous desire to thank you. I was in the history class you visited Wed. evening, and I was very pleased that I didn't blow off your performance; to be honest, I could have listened to you talk and sing for hours.

I want you to know that I left class that evening with a much changed outlook on life. It is extremely difficult to explain the way I felt after your performance--perhaps it was a mixture of friendship, anger and a real shame for all you've gone through. I realize you aren't out for sympathy, but you must understand it's difficult not to feel that way. It was so much different hearing your feelings and stories directly rather than reading about them or hearing them second hand. I feel as though I could go on forever but your time is precious. I pray

**Please Turn To page 23**